

CHRISTIANCOURIER

April 12, 2004

A Reformed Biweekly

No. 2738 \$1.60

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CHRISTIAN COURIER
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MAY 03 2004

United Methodists not united about lesbian minister

A mob "passing as a United Methodist Jury" dispensed mob justice in the case of Rev. Karen Dammann, charged an outraged churchman writing in *Christianity Today* about a church jury that cleared a self-confessed lesbian minister of all charges. The jury, he fumed, ignored Methodist jurisprudence and trampled on the rule of law to declare Dammann not guilty, and he warned observers from other denominations not to get too smug: "This kind of mob justice may soon be coming to a church near you."

The issue that elicited such strong words is, of course, the same one that has divided the Anglican communion as well — opening the ministries of the church to practicing homosexuals. Rev. Karen Dammann, 47, pastor of a United Methodist Church (UMC) in Bothell, Washington, announced in 2001 that she was a lesbian and had been living with her female partner for several years. Recently they were "married" in a ceremony in Oregon. She was subsequently charged by her denomination, the third largest in the US, with "practices declared by the UMC to be incompatible with Christian teachings."

The church's Book of Discipline states clearly: "Since the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teachings, self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in the UMC."

The 13-member jury selected to decide the case was not asked to discuss whether the policy of the church is right or biblical, but was commissioned to rule according to the standards of the church. Dammann herself admitted that she was a practicing lesbian "living in a partnered, covenanted relationship



Rev. Judith Schultz, trial court chair, reads the verdict.

UMMS PHOTO BY LES FETCHKO

with another woman," so it was expected to be an open and shut case.

After deliberating for nine hours, however, the jury ruled: "While sustaining the specification that Rev. Karen Dammann is a self-avowed practicing homosexual, we the trial court, do not find the evidence presented ... to be clear and convincing that Karen Dammann has engaged in any practices declared by the UMC to be incompatible with Christian teachings."

After acquitting Dammann, a member of the trial court read a

statement explaining that the jurors were "far from unanimous regarding biblical and theological understandings." After searching the Book of Discipline, however, they "did not find a declaration that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teachings and that therefore homosexuality is a chargeable offense."

They pointed instead to a section in the denomination's constitution that celebrates the inclusiveness and openness of the church and that rejects "every semblance of discrimination."

Continued on page 2...

Nigerian conference on Islamic law ends in walkout

Adrian and Wendy Helleman

A restless audience murmured audibly to express their disagreement with the speaker. Finally with shouts, "We are not satisfied!" some two hundred members of the audience walked out. This demonstration of anger marked the closing session of an academic conference on Comparative Perspectives on Shariah in Nigeria, held this past January, and sponsored jointly by the Religious Studies Department and the Faculty of Law at our University of Jos, in conjunction with the German University of Bayreuth.

During the past two years, certainly, implementation of Shariah (Islamic law) in twelve northern Nigerian states has led to significant tensions in Muslim-Christian relationships. Muslims argue that Shariah affects only Muslims, but experience has shown the contrary. Christians in these states find themselves treated as second-class citizens. While a prohibition on alcohol may not be the most serious problem for Christians (most of

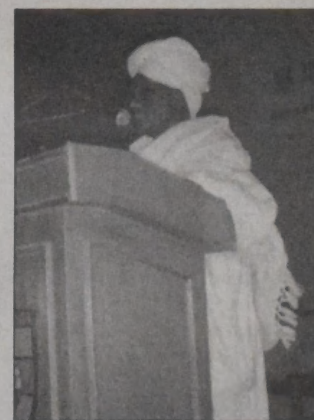
them do not drink), they have also been prevented from teaching Christian Religious Knowledge in the schools.* Muslims affirm the need for public enforcement of Shariah in order to live as Muslims. In fact, in northern Nigeria, Shariah has long been enforced in laws covering family and personal matters. Current problems have arisen particularly from more recent application in matters like murder and theft, which are aspects of criminal law.

Belligerent attitudes

The present conference was actually the second of two; the first was held in Germany in the summer of 2003, and there Nigerians presented recent research on the implementation of Shariah in the northern states. The intention of this conference, on the other hand, was to provide a wider historical and international perspective on Shariah. The organizers wanted to acquaint Nigerians with the way in which Shariah was being implemented in other parts of the world.

Most speakers, accordingly, came from Europe and the United States, all of them experts in their respective areas, whether history, law or human rights, as it pertained to Shariah in various Islamic countries. While only one of the main speakers was Nigerian, respondents were almost all Nigerian, with a careful balance of Christians and Muslims.

From questions posed at the end of presentations we soon noted the rather belligerent attitude of a sizeable portion of the audience. Those attending clearly expected presentations to have immediate application to Nigeria, and more particularly to Plateau State. Numerous Muslims expressed dismay at the respective speakers' lack of familiarity with the specifics of the Nigerian situation. It was also apparent that the Muslim population was well represented, and dominated the discussion. By our estimate, about 90 per cent of comments from the floor came from Muslims, especially from members of the Shariah implementation commit-



tees in various northern states.** When these Muslims had the microphone they typically prefaced questions with lengthy prepared speeches about the necessity of Shariah.

It became increasingly obvious that very few of them were prepared to listen, much less engage in dialogue with others. They were largely concerned to express themselves. See Nigerian Conference page 2...

News



Rev. Karen Dammann and her partner

Nigerian Conference

...continued from p.1

selves on an issue close to their hearts. While this was not altogether illegitimate, it certainly detracted from the intention of the conference, which was to provide an international perspective on this controversial subject.

Already with the second day of the three-day conference (Thursday - Saturday, January 15-17), we sensed the growing tension and restlessness of the audience. On Friday afternoon the conference took a lengthy break for Muslim prayers. When a similar break was not given in the Saturday schedule, a large segment of the audience walked out rather noisily at about 3 pm, thereby interrupting a presentation. So the final walk-out at 6 pm that evening did not come as a complete surprise. Everyone sensed that the mood of the conference was getting increasingly ugly. Indeed, with the walk-out there was even a sense of relief among those remaining in the hall, thankful that nothing worse had occurred.

Indeed, most of those who walked out were non-academics from the Jos area.

Their discontent was fueled by an unfounded rumor about the intent of the conference as a Western (read American) ploy to subvert the further implementation of Shariah. But the last straw for them came when the final main speaker, a leading Sudanese Muslim legal scholar, now at Emory State University (USA), argued that while all Muslims are bound by Shariah, it is not the business of the state to codify and enforce it. Very clearly they did not want to hear this.

Ethnic and political tensions as well as religious

Could the organizers have anticipated this public expression of dissatisfaction? Was the University of Jos really the best place for such a discussion? The organizers might have been more sensitive to the feelings of Muslims. Since the riots of September 2001, Jos has become something of a tinder box. Yet in Jos Christians and Muslims have lived side by side for decades, and we too rub shoulders with Muslims every day here. In fact, many of our colleagues at the University of Jos are Muslims, as are some of our students. On the streets we do business with Muslims and Christians alike.

Plateau State finds itself sandwiched between the predominantly Muslim north and the largely Christian south. Hence it is not surprising that this state has become the focal point for tension between the two religious communities. The tension is not simply religious, however; ethnic and political factors are at least as important. The 2001 riots in Jos (a few days before the attack on the World Trade Center) were primarily ethnic.

Journalists, unfortunately, often oversimplify the roots of conflict in referring to religious aspects. Of course, religion is important in the Nigerian context, but ethnicity is equally important, and if one adds political motives, the result can be explosive.

Power shift

The Muslim population of northern Nigeria is predominantly Hausa-Fulani.

Hausa is the lingua franca of large parts of sub-Saharan West Africa. But Christians of the north use the Hausa language as well. Before Nigerian independence in 1960, the Fulani, a nomadic cattle herding people found throughout West Africa, were the traditional rulers of the North. Even after independence most of the military rulers of Nigeria were Muslim, many of them Hausa-Fulani. They came to assume that they had a natural right to rule the country.

During the last decade, however, power has shifted away from the North. This is a phenomenon with which Muslims have great difficulty, also because they are losing the enormous wealth accumulated by those in power. In addition, Christian churches have been making significant inroads in the North, so that the demographic balance seems to be shifting in favor of Christians. Nonetheless, Muslims continue to argue that they comprise the majority. Since no valid census has been held for forty years, this claim is impossible to verify.

Two recent elections which have given power to a Christian president, Obasanjo, lead one to question the Muslim assumption. Christians are now the largest religious group, and want political control over the whole country. Not surprisingly, Muslims are threatened by these developments,

and the implementation of Shariah is a significant part of their response.

Even Muslims will concede that politicians in the North have used Shariah for their own political advantage. One of the Muslim speakers explained that among those politicians who promote implementation of Shariah, many deliberately exploit religion for their own political and material gain.

But he rejected the allegation that support of Shariah necessarily means exploiting religion for the oppression of women and the poor. Such a blanket condemnation of Shariah as a form of conspiracy, he said, has elicited a defensive Islamic response, a stiffening of resistance to change. The same speaker argued that critics are more justified in objecting to forms of punishment; he compared the severe punishment given a poor man who steals a goat, with the rather innocuous charge against the politician who enriches himself through his position, and is considered guilty only of "breach of trust," not theft. Such application of the law reflects ignorance, or deliberate refusal to recognize the provisions of Shariah, he claimed, and is not a failing of Shariah itself.

Cultural arrogance

Be that as it may, western Christians will do well to listen carefully to Muslims who are modern and western-educated, and can thus interpret Islam in terms that they should be able to understand. Many in North America do not realize how deeply Muslims "detest" the USA, mainly because they believe that it detests Islam and Muslims, citing its support for Israel, as well as the atrocities committed in Afghanistan and Iraq. Whether the West accepts such a Muslim reading of current affairs, and whether the perception is fair or balanced, is immaterial. This is what Muslims believe and it determines their response to western critique of Shariah. Americans typically describe punishments under the Muslim code as "barbaric" or "inhuman"; Muslims read such value-judgments as a reflection of cultural arrogance.

Unfortunately, they may be right. It is clear that if Americans want to foist their own culture on the world, yet are unwilling to take other cultures seriously, they cannot win "the war against terrorism."

This was all part of the final presentation, given by the Sudanese Islamic legal scholar whose position

...United Methodists continued

The argument, understandably, was a bit too subtle for many United Methodists to grasp, and they reacted with consternation and disbelief. Dr. Maxie Dunnam, president of Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky, called the acquittal a sign of anarchy in the church and predicted it might precipitate a schism in the denomination. "We cannot continue to live with a whole segment of the church that is deliberately disobeying the church's laws," he said in an article in the *New York Times*.

Patricia Muller, director of the Confessing Movement in the UMC, said, "I believe the vast majority of United Methodists are in grief and shock today.... A part of the jurisdiction has broken covenant with the rest of the church and has decided to go the way of the world, as opposed to being faithful and abiding by church law."

Afterward, the Confessing Movement issued a statement saying that the Northwest conference has become "schismatic": "The clergy have broken covenant with the church and failed to live up to their ordination vows."

James Berkley, whom we quoted at the beginning, asked, "In the entire Northwest, were there not 13 pastors to be found who knew integrity from deception in order to sit on the jury? If this jury is indicative of Methodist pastoral leadership in the Northwest, how can the UMC ever prosper?"

All the jurors were ministers in the Pacific Northwest Conference of the UMC, one of the denomination's five regions in the US, and the decision is not appealable.

There are regions in the UMC

where support for the verdict is very strong. Rev. Chuck Cooper, of Reconciling Ministries Clergy, said of the trial, "The Spirit of God was present without a doubt."

Rev. Peggy R. Gaylord, spokeswoman for Affirmation, a group working to make the church more inclusive, said, "We just really deplore any efforts to exclude to any degree any group from participation in the life of the church.... We get hung up on doctrine.... Doctrine was not what Jesus was all about."

Charles Colson in his daily column characterized the appeal to the Holy Spirit to refute Scripture as "a case of Methodist madness." He pointed out that Methodism began as a holiness movement and lamented the verdict as a lapse into relativism.

"Should anyone be surprised?" asked the conservative commentator Cal Thomas. "Having abandoned Scripture and the teachings of Methodism's founder John Wesley, who believed that the Bible was God's infallible Word to man, it is a short step to rejecting all statements, doctrines and principles based on eternal truths."

From April 27 to May 7 the General Conference of the UMC consisting of 1000 delegates will meet in Pittsburgh to debate church policy and revise the Book of Discipline that regulates the 10 million member denomination. It is expected to be a stressful meeting in which difficult decisions will have to be made.

[Harry der Nederlanden with files from the United Methodist News Service, the Evangelical Press, *Christianity Today*, the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*.]

Politics/News

motivated the massive walkout. He did not budge on his affirmation that the state has no business codifying and enforcing Shariah: "The main problem with the idea of an Islamic state that can enforce Shariah as positive law or official policy is that, in view of the inherent diversity of all interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah, such an effort will necessarily rely on the specific interpretation accepted by those in political power, to the exclusion of other interpretations which would be equally valid for other believers." He continued by noting that Islamic countries like Iran, Pakistan, and Sudan, all of which have enacted Shariah as the legal system and basis of public policy, have encountered severe problems as a result.

Yet he was well aware that Muslims tend to view opposition to enforcement of traditional formulations of Shariah as tantamount to apostasy, which is a crime punishable by death. This aspect of traditional application of Shariah he regarded as the most serious limitation of any positive role for Islam in public life. For him the idea of an Islamic state enforcing Shariah as positive legislation or official state policy was not only alien to Islamic history, but extremely dangerous in practice. Instead, he argued for Shariah having a constructive role in the public domain, without being enforced by the state as positive law.

He concluded by arguing for a public role for religion (specifically Islam), while the state should retain a religious neutrality. Since it is impossible to separate religion from politics, a total separation of religion and the state is also impossible, in his view. Accordingly, he advocated a special type of secularism, as a principle of public policy that seeks to secure the separation of religion from the state, while acknowledging and seeking to mediate the unavoidable interaction of religion and politics. Such a policy should ensure state neutrality while permitting free democratic choice in accordance with religious or other beliefs.

Although he did not use the term pluralism, his argument was certainly heading in that direction. For us, as Christians, and especially as faculty in the Religious Studies Department of the University of Jos, this position presented an encouraging note of sanity, even though we are aware that it is rather unpopular with many

Muslims themselves.

Inner disagreement about Shariah

While it is impossible to do justice to the complex arguments adduced by this top Islamic legal scholar, or to summarize adequately the positions of other interesting papers, we did want to reflect on the remarks that prompted the massive walkout, and place this event in a helpful perspective.

The critical turn came not from Christian/Muslim misunderstanding, but from acute disagreement among Muslims themselves on the interpretation of Shariah. Clearly, there is no unanimity on the matter among Muslims.

It became clear to us from these presentations that meaningful change will have to be preceded by a significant change in attitude on the part of both Muslims and Christians. Although the recent history of violent clashes and even massacres has posed rather difficult barriers here in the North and the Middle Belt, what is needed above all is an openness and willingness to understand the positions of the opposing religious group. Muslims must be willing to listen to opinions of others, starting with fellow Muslims, and then extending to non-Muslims. Ultimately, the only solution is an open pluralism, in which diverse religious and ethnic groups agree to recognize and accept each other, something that so far seems quite impossible. If Muslims are unwilling to accept a Muslim scholar who belongs to a different school of thought, they will certainly not accept Christians who are "westernized," and are therefore automatically suspect.

It is our prayer that the kind of dialogue at which the organizers were aiming may still be possible. If removal of Shariah is not an option, the manner of its implementation and the extent of its impact on non-Muslims is.

In a pluralistic society no group can achieve everything it wants. It must be prepared to accommodate itself, and compromise with others. Such is the nature of politics, after all. While many Christians are pessimistic about the prospect of dialogue, it is still much to be preferred above the violence which breaks out all too easily here in Nigeria. So we also ask your prayers for change in attitude, for without it



Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

Last month's terrorist attack in Madrid was as significant as the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington exactly two and a half years earlier. The casualties themselves were tragedy enough for those immediately affected. But the disaster is magnified by its implication for the on-going efforts of democratic governments to battle terrorism.

It is now apparent that the timing of the attack was not coincidental. It came 911 days after 9/11 and three days before Spain's parliamentary elections, which Prime Minister José María Aznar's governing Popular Party had been expected to win. Aznar had taken a hard line on terrorism, focusing especially on that fomented by the Basque separatist organization, ETA. His stance had also led him to join US President Bush's coalition of the willing in forcibly dislodging Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq.

Yet when voters went to the polls, still reeling from the events of 3/11, they repudiated Aznar's government and elected the opposition Socialists instead. To be sure, Spaniards, like many other Europeans, had already been sceptical of Aznar's pro-American stance. The Bush administration's near admission that its pre-war intelligence gathering had been flawed bolstered this feeling. Thus it is understandable that so many would judge that their doubts had been vindicated and that their prime minister had severely botched the country's foreign policy.

Yet appearances count for much when it comes to terrorism. Even if 99 terrorist plots are effectively foiled, one success counts for much. Although individual voters may have had solid reasons for supporting opposition parties, the net result was to hand the terrorists a victory. They had, it appeared, succeeded in sabotaging the electoral process in a democratic country. If it worked in Spain, why not in Poland or Britain? Or even the US itself, where a presidential election takes place in November?

Russian journalist Yulia Latynina has observed that, much as the masterminds of the New York

and Washington attacks turned the west's technological sophistication against itself, something similar, and more disturbing, occurred in Madrid: "In Spain, al-Qaeda dealt Western society an even more horrifying blow: Not only the technological, but also the democratic infrastructure of Western society could be turned against it."

This points to one of the genuine flaws in democracy, which Winston Churchill famously labeled the worst form of government, except for all the others. Twenty years ago Jean François Revel observed that democracies were finding it difficult to mobilize their energies to fight communism during the Cold War, primarily because their attentions and activities are inevitably dispersed in a variety of directions. Although Revel's analysis appeared dated after the demise of the Soviet bloc only five years later, it is certainly true that countries with autocratic governments can more easily stay the course than countries whose governments, along with their specific policy programs, come and go.

This indicates that, even as a reasonably good form of government, democracy is only as good as the people making up the electorate. If corruption is rife in the population at large, it will inevitably affect the operation of their government. Similarly, if the citizens lack the determination to face down external threats to their own security, no amount of government action to the contrary will, over the long term, be able to rectify this. It is safe to say then that any effort to ensure that democracy and effective, just government coincide will necessarily require ongoing efforts to revitalize and maintain the culture which nourishes them. Such efforts are more likely to originate within the churches, schools, businesses and labor unions than in government itself.

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there is little prospect for a lasting peace here. The very existence of Nigeria as a federal state may well be at issue; moreover, whatever happens in Nigeria will impact the rest of Africa.

Notes:

* Religious Knowledge is a required subject in Nigerian secondary schools; Islamic Religious Knowledge in Islamic schools, Christian Religious Knowledge in Christian schools.

** Only afterwards did we learn why this happened. Question period always occasioned a flurry of hands from different sections of the audience. While the chairman would point in a certain direction, the staff person holding the microphone would hand it to the person whom he (not necessarily the chairman) had selected.

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Letter

Ballistic Missile Defence System will not enhance security, say church leaders

Church leaders from churches affiliated with the Canadian Council of Churches, a body which embraces a broad spectrum of denominations including Catholic, Orthodox, Mennonite and Reformed, addressed a letter to Prime Minister Martin on March 15 urging him not to involve Canada in the Ballistic Missile Defence System being planned by the United States.

The system being developed by the US is intended to counter the threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles among countries deemed to be rogue states. The Bush administration plans to deploy the first phase of the system by 2004-05. Eventually the system intends to use satellites deployed in space to spot rogue missiles launched from anywhere on the earth so they can be intercepted before reaching their targets in North America.

The letter is signed by 20 church leaders, including William F. Veenstra, the Canadian Ministries Director of the Christian Reformed Church and Siebrand Wilts, of the Reformed Church in America. We reproduce the letter here in its entirety except for the list of signatories.

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

We write to urge you to guide Canada toward an intensified commitment to nuclear disarmament and binding controls over ballistic missiles as the most effective and practical means of working for the safety and protection of Canadians. Strategic ballistic missile defence systems, we believe, can never satisfy the deep human yearning for immunity from nuclear terror.

Nuclear Weapons

Nuclear weapons promise destruction so complete that only the language of human annihilation hints at the

potential catastrophe that lurks in the 30,000 nuclear weapons still threatening this world. Tragically and ironically, having committed the folly of building these weapons in the name of security, humankind now scours technology and science for ways to avoid the devastating insecurity that the splitting atom promises. Proposed Security solutions like ballistic missile defence fail to counter the nuclear threat and precipitate further insecurities. This is illustrated by current United States BMD initiatives: Expenditure of US\$200 billion over the past 50 years has led to a meagre result – a proposed system that is designed to address only a handful of the 1000-plus nuclear tipped strategic missiles capable of striking North America. Even this minimal system lacks operationally tested capability. Russia and China are moving to counter any defensive capabilities that the proposed system might one day deliver, and the United States continues to develop new nuclear weapon designs and threatens to resume nuclear testing. This sets the stage for a dangerous and cyclical defence-versus-offence dynamic in the strategic environment. We deplore the ongoing militarization of relationships and continuing nuclear arms competition this entails.

In this context, we repeat our declaration that “inasmuch as we are called to share in God’s redemptive purpose and to restore the covenant of love and blessing between God and his creation, we are called also to pursue national policies which seek to reduce, and ultimately to eliminate, our reliance on the destructive power of nuclear weapons for advancing the national interest.” (Canadian church leaders letter presented to the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister on December 14, 1982.)

Weaponization of Space

The Pentagon itself lacks confidence that the ground-based, mid-course interception system that Canada is considering supporting can ever be made to work, and so it pursues a space-based element that violates an overwhelming global consensus against the weaponization of space. In its current budget request the Pentagon pledges to begin development of a space-based weapons test bed in 2005 and plans deployment and space-based testing beginning in 2012. We note with dismay that in the face of this explicit US intention to make space-based weapons an integral part of ballistic missile defence, Defence Minister David Pratt’s 15 January 2004 letter to the US Defence Secretary makes no reference to Canada’s commitment to preventing the weaponization of space.

The weaponization of space and related BMD developments are hollow attempts at technical solutions that only intensify the nuclear threat. Prime Minister, the responsibility to protect Canadians and all humankind from the threat of nuclear terror is a grave and urgent imperative, and we urge you to re-emphasize the historic position of successive Canadian Governments that “the only sustainable strategy for the future is the elimination of nuclear weapons entirely. The only realistic objective for the international community is progressive reduction of the existing number of nuclear weapons leading to their elimination.” (Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation: Advancing Canadian Objectives, Government Statement, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, April 19, 1999.)

Verifiable Compliance

It is only through a redoubled commitment to reduce existing nuclear arsenals and to prevent the spread of

nuclear weapons and strategic range ballistic missiles that our safety can be enhanced. Recent promising developments related to Iranian and Libyan willingness to eschew nuclear weapons development and to commit their nuclear facilities to international inspections point the way forward. Diplomacy to bring North Korea back into verified compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty must be part of the “sustainable strategy” that, as referred to above, the Government of Canada promotes.

A World Free from Fear and Free from Want

It has been the witness of Canadian churches to successive Prime Ministers that the possession, use, or threat to use nuclear weapons can never be understood to be within God’s plan for creation. The extraordinary squandering of resources in the vain pursuit of technological immunity from nuclear weapons, especially while new weapons and new nuclear use strategies are still being introduced, is itself an offence against the will of the Creator. There are urgent worldwide human security crises in health care and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, in small arms proliferation and spreading violence, in entrenched poverty, in human rights violations. As a workable alternative to wasting resources on unworkable strategic missile defence schemes, we call on the Canadian government to fulfil its public promise to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and so halve absolute global poverty by 2015. We are called then to a vision of a world free from fear and free from want – a world where people live in peace, confident their basic needs will be met. Canada should pursue security according to this vision.

What We Must Do

We call on you to make it clear to Canadians that this country has never advocated BMD or space weapons as a credible means of dealing with a strategic missile borne nuclear threat. Furthermore we urge your government to unequivocally reject the expensive futility of ballistic missile defence. We call on you to focus on the more realistic pursuit of diplomacy and verification technology to mitigate the missile threat, and further, to encourage the United States to do the same. The reallocation of the billions now squandered on strategic ballistic missile defence could achieve works of wonder to the benefit and sustainable security of all humanity.

We praise our Creator for the abundant life which [is] granted to us in this land, we pledge ourselves to support the pursuit of justice and equity in all lands and we commit ourselves to work toward the removal of the arsenals of destruction which frustrate the search for justice and which threaten life itself, in our land and throughout the world. (Canadian church leaders letter presented to the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister on December 14, 1982.)

Please be assured of our prayers and support as you undertake to fulfill your important responsibilities. May God’s own Spirit light your path.

You must put my laws and customs into practice; you must keep them, practice them; and so you shall be secure in your possession of the land. The land will give its fruit, you will eat your fill and live in security.

Leviticus 25:18-19

Christian Courier

Formerly known as Calvinist Contact
Founded in 1945

An independent biweekly that seeks to:
report on significant events in the Christian community
and the world; express opinions infused by Scripture and
rooted in a Reformed perspective;
provide contact for the Christian community.

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1 Hiscott St. St. Catharines, ON, L2R 1C7

Tel: (905) 682-8311; 1-800-969-4838

Fax: (905) 682-8313; Web site: www.christiancourier.ca

Publications Mail Registration No. 09375

We acknowledge the financial assistance of the Government of
Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP),
toward our mailing costs.

Letters

Brutality in *The Passion*

Peter Slofstra is right on in his letter about the violence in *The Passion of the Christ* (CC, 3/15/04). Even *Chicago Sun-Times* film critic Roger Ebert called it "the most violent film I have ever seen." And he has seen a few movies in his day.

The blood spattering in your face brutality of Gibson's film contrasts with the restraint of the Gospel writers in presenting the violence of the passion story. There are no more than nine verses in any gospel that portray the violence of Jesus' last hours. For example, in contrast to the eleven minute sequence of horrendous lashings in Gibson's film, the gospel writers only say the soldiers "flogged" Jesus. Now that is a word loaded with torturous pain, but the gospels spare us the bloody, gory details.

Gibson finds every opportunity to inflict torture on Christ, even where the gospels are silent. For instance, the unrelenting beatings on the road to the cross are not mentioned in any gospel.

Misplaced emphasis on violence

I think, in a couple of ways, *The Passion* has even misplaced its emphasis on violence. With the film's fixation on the flogging and beatings and on the nailing to the cross, Gibson's Christ has most of the life beat out of him by the time he is up on the cross. Where is the terrible anguish of gasping for air and slow suffocation that marked the dying hours of one who is crucified? And in the end, the arms of this Christ are not painfully distended (as so starkly painted in Grünewald's "Small Crucifixion"), but somewhat limp.

Secondly, Gibson's film dwelt on the bodily torture of Christ. Except for the garden scene, the film was not successful in conveying the horrendous inner suffering of having to bear the fullness of God's wrath and the burden of the sins of the world.

The question is: why such physical violence in this film? Your article, Mr. Editor, on "The Mystic River of Violence" suggests that Gibson may be fixated on violence, a major theme long featured in American films. That may be so.

Participation in Christ's sufferings

But I think there is another reason as well. *The Passion* is an extremely graphic expression of a long Roman Catholic tradition of Cross-centered devotion. This tradition, which reached its apex in the late Middle Ages, centered on meditative participation in the painful details of Christ's sufferings. The believer is

called to live into the biblical scene by meditating on each particular event of Jesus' passion and on each individual wound on his body. Out of this grew the devotional practice of participating in the fourteen Stations of the Cross, and the practice of meditating on the Five Sorrowful Mysteries when saying the Rosary (the agony of Jesus in the garden, the scourging of Jesus at the pillar, the crowning with thorns, carrying the cross, and his crucifixion and death).

Related to this is the Catholic notion that the mass is a re-sacrifice of Christ, each time it is done.

As many Protestants seem unaware, Gibson's *Passion* is a very Catholic film. Its scenes are drawn not only from the biblical gospels, but also from Catholic tradition. Gibson is a very traditional Roman Catholic, and this film appears to be an act of Lenten devotion for him. It is no coincidence that it was released on Ash Wednesday.

The film powerfully draws viewers into cinematic participation in the Stations of the Cross and into cinematic mediation on the Five Sorrowful Mysteries. Certain scenes come from the Stations of the Cross. For example, the scene where Veronica wipes the face of Jesus is the sixth station, and the Pieta scene – the emotional climax of the movie – with Mary cradling the lifeless body of her Son is the thirteenth station. Neither scene can be found in the gospels.

Mary and mysticism

Mary is the second most important character in Gibson's *Passion*, even though only one gospel mentions her in the passion story – in just three verses (John 19:25-27). Gibson (like the current pope) considers Mary to be a co-redemptrix with Christ, and in the movie we see her suffering inwardly as

her Son is physically tortured. The viewer is drawn to identify with her, to suffer with her, to share her grief.

For Gibson, the primary inspiration for the movie was the mystical devotional work of eighteenth century Catholic nun, Sister Anne Emmerich, titled *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. Certain scenes are drawn from her visions, e.g., Pilate's wife offering towels to Mary and Mary Magdalene, which they use to wipe up Jesus' blood. But it is especially the way in which Emmerich imaginatively paints the tortures and agonies of Christ in graphic detail that inspired the movies' obsession with physical brutality.

As Protestants, we need to be reminded that Christ died once for all. In our acts of devotion he does not need to be sacrificed anew. Hence we use the symbol of the empty cross. Slofstra had it right; the Christ we follow dealt with the horror of the cross so that we would not have to.

If Christians don't speak out against the violence of this film, what right do we have to speak out when Hollywood tries to one-up this brutality in another film?

Don Sinnema

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Seeing ourselves in Gibson's marketing moves?

From Peter Slofstra's letter to the editor it seems one of the Mel Gibson's marketing moves regarding his film was "miss this opportunity and your neighbor may miss out on Christ's redemption." What he really is saying is "miss this opportunity and your neighbor may miss out on God!" It is a familiar "triangling" move we all use at times to give our arguments more weight or clout! How often don't we hear "God said..." or "God told me..." or "Scripture says..." and on and on it goes. It is especially used by television evangelists for fund raising. The question Christians should have been asked was "Is this film a valuable tool for evangelism?" "If so, why?" or "If not, why not?"

Gibson also used the theology of atonement and substitution to rationalize the brutality of Jesus' suffering. This is also what we do: "His death is about our sin..." or "He died for us..." or "we sinned first and He paid the price..." All of that keeps us at arm's length from the cruelty of the cross which is often a stumbling block for seriously searching non Christians.

The question Christians may need to struggle with, and is posed in my column in the last issue, is "What does that say about God and/or about us?"

Arlene van Hove

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(ISSN 1192-3415) Published biweekly on Mondays.

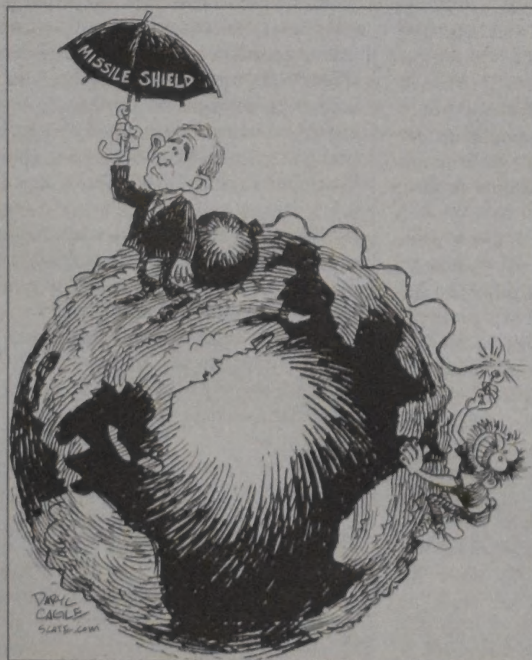
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Letters/Opinion

Holding up a vision of peace during a war on terror

In a recent *CRC Source*, Sandra Elgersma, the CRC's social justice coordinator for Canada, introduced a campaign called "Cultivating Just Peace" in which CRC congregations are invited to join other denominations to sign postcards to be delivered to Prime Minister Paul Martin by KAIROS, an interchurch organization of which the CRC is a member.

The intent is to influence his government in its decisions on foreign and defense policies. The action seeks to counter demands for increased investment in Canada's military capability and decreasing interest in supporting developing countries through overseas development assistance.

"These trends reflect one vision of human security," writes Elgersma. "The KAIROS campaign invites Christians to question the accepted wisdom about the pursuit of security and ask what God is calling us to do and whose vision of security we ought to support and uphold."

The letter from the Canadian Council of Churches printed on the fourth page of this issue is also part of that campaign. I concur with that letter in its assessment that the ballistic missile defense system is probably a colossal waste of money and an investment in techno-security that is almost surreal. But with Lowell Witvoet, I have deep misgivings about embracing the whole of the so-called "peace agenda." Lowell addresses points made in the KAIROS material which most of our readers will not have in hand, but I think what he says is quite clear without it.

Dear Sandra,

Re: "Seeking Abundant Life in the Age of Insecurity" and "Just Peace . . . True security."

Let me begin by saying that I laud your desire for true security and a just peace as expressed in the above mentioned papers. However, I have serious misgivings about the way the problems are stated and the solutions proposed.

When an individual or a committee or an organization speaks for the church it must do so prophetically. Language must be used that reflects the reality as described and defined in the Bible. The Bible uses terminology such as sin, evil, bad, injustice, etc. as well as grace, restoration, good, peace, etc. when it points to realities of life.

Lumping together "the events of September 11, 2001 and conflicts in Iraq, Congo, Palestine and Afghanistan" as if they were of the same kind and magnitude lacks discernment. Labeling them symbols of insecurity misses the point. They are far more serious than that. The terrorist attack of 9/11 is a concrete example of an evil unleashed by evil men. They need to be labeled for what they are.

Countering such evil by engaging in a war on terror is done to prevent more of the same.

Ousting the Taliban's reign of oppression in Afghanistan and taking down Saddam Hussein and his reign of terror in Iraq are designed to bring an end to such evils. Radical and militant Islam must be met with proper responses.

Recent history (two world wars) has taught us well enough to realize that certain expressions of evil need to be met with military power to secure the lives of millions. When our lives are threatened by evil acts of evil men or the military might of the power-hungry, we need the presence, the military power of those who can render the aggressors harmless.

Trying peaceful means (remember Chamberlain?) to deal with the evil designs of dictators and tyrants is useless. When Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire in Rwanda requested military assistance from the U.N. his plea for help went unheeded. As a result hundreds of thousands of Tutsis were slaughtered. Military power displayed and used in a measured way would have gone a long way in preventing much of that slaughter.

In the sinful reality of today putting up fences may become a necessity and the best of all bad solutions. Building a fence as in Palestine may not be entirely successful or even fair when it involves a land grab, but it is effective in keeping the number of slaughtered innocents down. If security of life and limb is important it certainly is a way to secure the life of many innocents.

When the innocents are no more it is hard to provide the abundant life as envisaged in these papers.

With regard to the abundant life I find the definition and the use made of it in your papers somewhat confusing. When you define the abundant life, life to the full as in the NIV Study Bible, reference

is made to John 10:10. Here Jesus promises the abundant life to those who are his, to those who have entered by the gate. The unregenerate and the wicked do not share in the abundant life that Jesus promises because the nature of this abundant life is essentially of a different, a spiritual kind. It includes eternal life.

I do believe that as a church we have a duty to provide food, shelter, and clothing, in as far as we are able, to those who are in need. However, I do not believe that the provision of food and the absence of poverty, oppression and war constitute the abundant life that Jesus links to Himself.

You state "The hope of abundant life is reflected in a common vision for human security: freedom from want, freedom from fear — these are the basic conditions that make human flourishing possible." Here it seems to me that the abundant life is defined in purely socio-economic terms. I hope that this is not what you intend to say, for such a reduction of the meaning of the Gospel is clearly in conflict with the Bible.

On the card attached and addressed to Dear Prime Minister I read: "Military responses to the threat of terrorism have eroded, not enhanced, global peace and security." I have only one question. Would a terrorism that goes unchecked enhance global peace and security when we know what radical, militant Islam and other terrorists are all about?

When I read the next line: "We agree with Canada's position against the war in Iraq . . ." I must confess that I and many others with me were disappointed and felt ashamed that our government did not join the coalition in their action against Iraq.

In conclusion I know that many members of our church do not share your definition of the abundant life and the political stance you have taken in the first part of your letter addressed to "Dear Prime Minister." I believe that you therefore, you cannot presume to speak for all the members of the CRC. I am afraid that doing so may result in serious divisions in our church.

I wish I could join you in your efforts, Sandra, but I'm afraid that our differences do not allow me to do so. Meanwhile, I wish you all the best and hope that you will

After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides



Some random thoughts on Bert

When Todd Bertuzzi's right fist met Steve Moore's head, I was in my living room sitting back in a recliner. The game was well out of reach for the Canucks, and my brother and I had resigned ourselves to watching the rest of the game purely out of duty as die-hard fans. We just hoped nothing stupid would happen. Something stupid happened. Part revenge and part frustration, Bertuzzi's punch has been talked about to exhaustion (especially around here). I've gone back and forth between disowning and defending Bertuzzi in talking with people about the incident. The bottom line, though, is that the whole thing makes me sick (in a shocked, disillusioned sort of way). What disgusted me most was the premeditated, cowardly nature of the attack. Moore had knocked Markus Naslund out a few games before, so now it was payback time. A sucker punch from behind seemed in the heat of the moment to be a good idea for old Bert. It was sickening.

There is something else, however, that I find sickening as well and that's the sanctimonious way in which media figures from other sports have condemned hockey for these sorts of "typical acts of revenge" (as one baseball writer called it). The truth is, retribution and retaliation are very much present in any number of sports. In baseball, one form of revenge for being wronged by another player is to hurl a 95 mile-an-hour baseball at somebody's head. In football, vengeful acts include yanking somebody's facemask in ways that their necks don't naturally move or drilling the opposing quarterback in the back at full speed. Basketball players might throw an elbow in your face to avenge an earlier sin. But this is hockey of course. I just finished reading a column in the *Washington Post* about how hockey is more or less legalized violence. The writer complained that hockey glorified violence to a degree that modern, civilized people shouldn't tolerate.

She is right to a minor extent. There is something wrong when 18,000 people stand up and cheer because some guy won a fistfight or knocked somebody's head into the boards with a body-check.

I have to admit that I felt the roar of revenge in my ears when Naslund was knocked down by Moore. It brought out some stuff I don't usually like to feel. Let's be honest about sports and retaliation, though. Most sports appeal to our sense of justice. We want hard work to be rewarded. We want the bad guys to be punished. In a world where no good deed seems to go unpunished, we can go to or watch a game and see justice dealt out swiftly and graphically. In a both conscious and subconscious level, it's nice to know that an act of evil will be dealt with — either today or in a game three weeks from now. Sports rhetoric is in fact war rhetoric. Phrases such as "avenging a loss," "exacting revenge" and "bitter enemies" are tossed around all the time by players and in the media. What was going on between Vancouver and Colorado was a battle between bitter rivals. Like it or not, that's what most fans enjoy seeing.

What they don't enjoy is when the act of retaliation is done in a cowardly manner, such as in Bertuzzi's case. Cowardly acts of revenge have no place in sports, whether it's a fastball thrown at a batter's head or a punch from behind on a hockey player. Bertuzzi's tears and puffy face at his press conference made my heart cry, "Give him grace." But my head said, "See you next year, Bert."

Tim Antonides has returned to BC after a year of graduate work to teach and coach at Surrey Christian School



seriously reconsider some of the statements made or correct me if and where I have misinterpreted you.

Lowell Witvoet
St. Catharines

See related article on page 4.

Culture

How to change the world (1)

The treasures of the Egyptians

Richard Greydanus, Rob Joustra,
and Gideon Strauss

Starting with Augustine of Hippo, the North African bishop (anno Domini 354 to 430), Christian social thinkers have used the phrase "the treasures of the Egyptians" to refer to the products of a surrounding culture as these may be used by Christians. This rather obscure phrase comes from the story of the Hebrew exodus out of Egypt.

As the story from the book of Exodus goes, a multitude of young Egyptians died on the terrible night of the Passover because the ruler of Egypt would not set the Hebrew slaves free or allow them to leave Egypt. After that night the Hebrews were finally allowed – even encouraged – by their masters to leave. Following the LORD's instructions, the Hebrews asked their neighbors for "objects of silver and gold" – "the treasures of the Egyptians" – before beginning a forty-year trek through the desert and into the Promised Land.

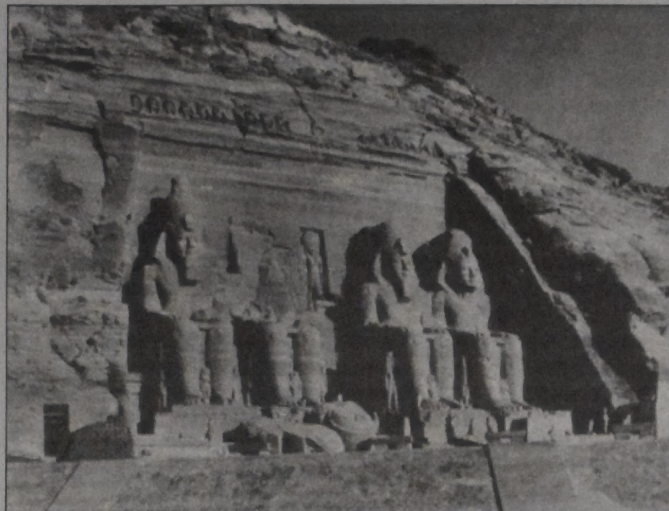
Augustine used this story to justify taking the best Greco-Roman culture had to offer and using it for the glory of God.

Sorting treasure from trash

In following Augustine's guideline – that Christians can use the treasures of the cultures in which they find themselves to advance the reign of God – it is necessary to distinguish between the treasure and the trash of the Egyptians. For a couple of obvious examples of such trash in our culture, think of the top shelf on the magazine rack in any local corner store, or a fair number of movies at your local movie rental store.

Separating out the cultural garbage from the cultural gold is often not that easy. What in one person's hand is a treasure, in the hand of the next is misused and becomes trash. A computer, a cellphone, or car can be abused as easily as they can be used for good. Which is not to deny that it is easier to misuse some things than others.

Christians have tried to find a response to this problem through the centuries. Sometimes, because of the difficulty of finding a satisfactory response, Christians have claimed that the only faithful response is to leave behind culture itself. But human beings are intrinsically cultural beings. Culture is nothing more or less than the



The temple of Ramses II the despotic ruler who oppressed the Israelites.

many ways in which we live. We express ourselves in a manifold number of ways, through speech, art, stories, social structures, science, technology (the list could go on), and in doing so we respond to the possibilities of God's creation in which we live and of which we are a part. Leaving culture behind is impossible. Instead, we must continue the struggle to articulate a response to the mixture of gold and garbage around us. We must continue to reflect on the relationship between the life Christians lead and the cultures in which we live, or, as it is often referred to in abbreviated form, on the question of "Christ and Culture."

The Lutheran princes vs the Anabaptists

History offers us many examples of the different answers Christians have given to the question of "Christ and Culture." To recount one, in 1534 a group of Anabaptists took over the city of Munster in Westphalia near the western border of Germany. They proclaimed that the Day of Judgment was near, crowned their leader as "King David," and established a regime that in some ways resembled the Old Testament laws – in particular, they began to practice polygamy. In response the Catholic bishop and Lutheran prince of the area besieged and finally invaded the city, where they butchered the Anabaptists and tortured their leaders to death.

Here we have two very different views on what type of behavior is permissible for Christians. We might find it difficult to understand how these Anabaptists

could justify a way of life so obviously immoral to a person who has read the Bible. Some would ask if this group could be called Christian even in the very loosest sense. Others, however, would find the use of force by the prince no more Christian than the sexual extravagance of the Munsterites. But it is not our intention to explain here how each justified their cultural actions. Our point is this: Christ has come as Redeemer of God's creation, but what this redemption means for culture, in day-to-day life, is open to widely divergent interpretations.

Five models

In his famous book on this question, with the unsurprising title *Christ and Culture*, H. Richard Niebuhr helps us make sense of these divergent interpretations. If we use very broad brush strokes, he says, we can paint the ways in which Christians have responded to the challenges of culture into five distinctive corners.

At one end of the spectrum Niebuhr sees the position he calls *Christ against Culture*. A Christian group adopting this position would attempt to totally reject the culture in which they live. This first option has historically proven to be impossible to implement. It is not practically possible to live as if you had no non-Christian neighbors, which is one implication of Christ against Culture.

At the other end of the spectrum Niebuhr sees the position he calls the *Christ of Culture*. A Christian group adopting this position would attempt a complete and almost entirely uncritical acceptance of the culture in which they live.

Choosing this option would make it impossible to draw a distinction between being "in the world" and being "of the world."

These two extreme positions, says Niebuhr, do not represent the historical centre of Christianity. It is far more common to find Christians who affirm both Christ and Culture in some way. Most Christians believe that Christ has some purpose for human culture; that culture can and must, in some sense, be redeemed.

The first of these more common positions Niebuhr identifies with the characteristically Catholic response, which he calls *Christ above Culture*.

Niebuhr considers this response to be socially conservative. It tends toward a close identification of Christ and his Gospel with the institutional church. The institutional church then transfers that identification to church-centered instances of human culture. Morality becomes multi-tiered: some "levels" of human life are considered to be more moral or more holy than others; closeness to God is identified with proximity to the church. As the perfection and holiness of God is more closely identified with the institutional church, an understanding of sin's all-encompassing effect also within the church is lost.

The most influential model

The second common response is perhaps the most influential in the broader North American evangelical community, Niebuhr, who identifies it with the historical Lutheran position, calls this response *Christ and Culture in Paradox*. In this view, the world is radically corrupt, but God does not abandon it. Christians are sinners justified by grace who live in a world where necessary evils abound; money easily leads to corruption, but must be used; government often makes decisions which Christians disagree with, but must be obeyed. The individual believer is left with a Christianity that is mostly limited to the realm of personal piety. The tendency of this response, maintains Niebuhr, is away from projects of social reform.

The final response Niebuhr calls *Christ the Transformer of Culture*. Among the proponents of this view we find historical figures familiar

to readers of this newspaper: John Calvin, Abraham Kuyper, and Herman Dooyeweerd. These and similar Christian social thinkers see the world as fallen, but open to historical sanctification both personally and socially. Humans beings were created for life in this world and are commanded to act culturally – to cultivate the creation – in ways that respond to God's design for the world. Christians are to bring the life-giving message of God's reign to bear on their own cultural context, seeking its redemption from within.

The Christian encounter with culture context beyond the Christian community can draw on the positive emphases of the three mainstream responses. Christ above Culture brings to the discussion an emphasis on Christ's transcendence above any specific instance of culture. Christ and Culture in Paradox brings an emphasis on the morally problematic nature of culture as a result of the curse of sin. And the emphasis on the universal nature of Christ's redemption found in Christ the Transformer of Culture urges Christians to take the Gospel to the four corners of God's world and into the many facets of human life.

So ends our general survey of historic Christian responses to the question of Christ and Culture. It will serve as a backdrop for a series of articles which will look at different ideas about how Christians in faithful service to God can change their world.

The three participants in this article series are Rob Joustra and Richard Greydanus, two honors history majors at Redeemer University College, and Gideon Strauss, a part-time teacher at Redeemer University College as well as Research and Education Director of the Christian Labour Association of Canada and editor of the Work Research Foundation's journal *Comment* (www.wrf.ca/comment). Of the five different options that Niebuhr outlines we all find the final, and characteristically Reformed, response to be our starting point.

The second article in this series will examine a paper given by Professor James Davison Hunter, a Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, entitled "To Change the World."

Church

Sri Lankan churches call on voters to back religious freedom

Anto Akkara

New Delhi (ENI) – Churches in Sri Lanka have called on voters in the general elections, scheduled for April 2, to give their support to political parties supporting freedom of religion.

"We appeal to the citizenry of our country to denounce regressive measures and to vote for the protection of freedom of religious worship and practice we have enjoyed thus far," said the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka in a statement on March 12. The Christian council, which groups major Protestant churches, said it was making what it called a "special plea" against the background of incidents of religious intolerance. Sri Lanka has reported more than 100 attacks on churches in recent months, following protests by Buddhist monks who have demanded legislation to ban what

they have declared are "unethical" conversions.

The Roman Catholic Church in Sri Lanka has also called on voters to support political parties that stand for religious freedom and peace in the Buddhist-majority nation torn by ethnic conflict over the past two decades. "We call on all political parties not to use religious or ethnic differences, as they are divisive instruments for short-term political gain," the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka said in their election guidelines. The Sinhala Urumaya (Heritage) party has put up only Buddhist monks for the 196 seats in the Sri Lankan parliament. The National Christian Council's general secretary, the Rev. Ebenezer Joseph, said that although the party was unlikely to win many seats, it "could widen the division on religious lines."



Wolvendaal Church in Sri Lanka. Built in 1749 by Dutch settlers in what was then Ceylon.

PHOTO BY JAN SCHATENS

Militant Buddhist monks attack Christian churches in Sri Lanka

Elizabeth Kendal

The religious situation in Sri Lanka has been deteriorating for several years. However, a momentum seems to be gathering and heading towards serious confrontation between the Buddhist religious establishment, the Sri Lankan government, the NGOs and the Church.

Buddhist monks, through their recently formed Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) party, are now contesting the April 4 elections. Monks are protesting and campaigning against "the NGO mafia" and targeting groups such as World Vision. Churches and Christian workers are being harassed and violently attacked on an almost daily basis.

World Evangelical Alliance Goodwill Ambassador Johan Candelin, Finland, has recently concluded a one-week official visit to Sri Lanka and is deeply concerned about the ongoing attacks in the island. One hundred and forty-six places of worship have been closed down over the last four months, and the world should really take a closer look at the growing trend of nationalistic Buddhism in Sri Lanka. No one has been condemned for any of the attacks. That sends a signal that you can do this without any consequences."

Interview with Johan Candelin,

Q: How bad is the situation in Sri Lanka for Christians?

JC: The situation is very bad. There are the direct attacks by mobs with firebombs etc., but there is also an anti-Christian campaign going on in the media and this incites the local threats. So mentally and spiritually the suffering is enormous. December 2003 alone saw about 40 attacks, and then we need to remember that not even half of the attacks are reported. Just think of the children in a family who see their home attacked and burnt down!

Q: To what extent is the present religious violence against Christians related to the peace process? (The proposed peace deal would give Tamils autonomy in the north and power-sharing in the national government.)

JC: It seems to me that the Sinhalese national identity is rather weak and the Tamil, rather strong, leaving many Sinhalese feeling threatened. This campaign seems to be a reaction to that feeling of insecurity. On one front people say, "The Tamils are getting the north," and, "the Norwegian peace facilitators have a secret agenda." On the other many say there is an American agenda to use the Evangelical churches to destroy the Buddhist heritage in the south.

The Evangelical population is, however, only about 1 percent, so there is not really much logic in this. But of course logic and feelings seldom go hand in hand. It is also

interesting to see that almost all attacks are in the South!

Q: What has led to the present severe deterioration? To what extent are advertising, media and political figures feeding it?

JC: For years there seems to have been going on behind the scene a very well organized campaign against greater Christian influence. Part of this strategy has been that the attacks will not be made inside the big cities and against the "old churches." Rather, when the gospel is shared for the first time in a Buddhist village then the attacks begin.

Newspapers, books and banners are used for the hate and disinformation campaign. On one burnt church wall I saw a great banner claiming "the Church is no more." Of course the claim that the Christians had killed the beloved Buddhist leader Venerable Soma in December was the trigger for a number of attacks. Soma died in Moscow of a heart attack and three non-Christian doctors made it clear that he had died a natural death but that did not stop the campaign.

Q: Elections are approaching on April 4. Does the newly formed party of Buddhist monks, the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU), pose any real threat in terms of their ability to polarize society, heighten Buddhist nationalist zeal, stoke sectarian and ethnic tension, or grab the balance of power?

JC: Yes, it has been a long time since Buddhist leaders last ran for Parliament. If some of them are elected, it will have a very bad effect on religious freedom. One bad effect would be that they would have a national, democratic platform for their anti-Christian message. Another bad effect would be that as monks, they would affect other Buddhists in other parties.

Their party might even hold the balance of power, enabling them to be the party that decides whether the present government or the opposition gets the majority in the new Parliament. In that case, they would have much more influence than they really should. A third bad effect would be that they would surely try to introduce an anti-conversion law after the Indian model. And many other MPs would hesitate to vote against that, fearing it might look like they are defending the Christians against Buddhism.

Q: What is the mood amongst Sri Lankan Christians?

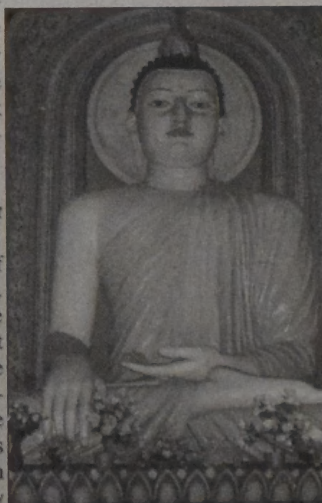
JC: The mood is good but of course they are very concerned. There are two good things: 1) The Evangelical Alliance does a great job in coordinating and helping the suffering churches. 2) Since the attacks on Catholic churches, the Catholic Church now clearly also is defending total religious freedom for all Christians. That solidarity strengthens the Christian voice.

Q: What does the future hold for Sri Lanka's Christians?

JC: Worst scenario: Breakdown of the peace process and a stronger influence of violent nationalistic Buddhism. It needs to be said, however, that most Buddhists are not violent and do not support attacks.

Best scenario: Peace, better protection of the Christian minority, effective rule of law and the opening of constructive talks between Evangelicals and Buddhist. Both are afraid of the other group now.

Elizabeth Kendal is Principal Researcher and Writer for the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty News & Analysis



Buddha in Sri Lanka temple

Church

Eritrea arrests entire families of evangelicals

LOS ANGELES (Compass) – Eritrean authorities began raiding the private homes of evangelical Christians in March, arresting and jailing entire families caught praying and reading the Bible together.

For the first time, criminal charges and punishing fines were being ordered against these "outlawed" Christians, although no formal court hearings were reported.

In two separate arrests in the capital of Asmara, families (including children) from the Rema Charismatic Church were arrested and sent to prison.

In the first incident on March 17, a lay leader from the Rema Church identified only by his given name Kelete was arrested in his home at midnight with his wife, six children and his father-in-law.

Reportedly the nine believers were having family devotions together after the father-in-law arrived late in the evening. Without warning, the police raided the home and put them all under arrest. After spending the night at a nearby police station, they were transferred to prison.

The following evening, another Rema Church leader by the first name of Habeteab was arrested with his wife and five children and taken to jail for the night. The entire family was sent to the same prison the following day.

In the second arrest, the head of the home was charged with trying to "start a new religion" in Eritrea. Reportedly an official at the police station remarked that President Isaias Afwerki had ordered the police and military to arrest any individuals and groups not belonging to Eritrea's four "official" religions (Orthodox, Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran and Muslim).

In another arrest on the evening of February 23, ten believers from the Full Gospel Church meeting in a home in the Aba Shwale district of Asmara were taken to jail. All remain in prison except for an elderly lady hosting the group, who was ordered to pay a fine of 500 Nakfa (\$37, locally more than half a month's salary) for holding an illegal meeting for worship in her home.

According to latest reports, of the 51 evangelicals from Asmara's Hallelujah Church who were arrested in mid February, 46 remain under incommunicado arrest in a military prison.

In a March 9 release, Amnesty

International declared these detained church members to be "prisoners of conscience, who are being imprisoned for practicing their religion."

"There are also concerns for their safety," the release stated, "as those held in military custody are at risk of torture, which often includes the 'helicopter' method of being tied in a contorted position in the open air for a week or more, almost 24 hours a day."

Earlier this month, President Afwerki warned in a public speech that some religious groups in Eritrea were being deluded by foreigners to "distract from the unity of the Eritrean people and distort the true meaning of religion." In his remarks, delivered on March 5 during the ceremonial installation of Abune Antonios, the new patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church, Afwerki declared that such "futile efforts" would not be tolerated by his government.

The president's comments were reported in detail in the Tigrinya edition of *Eritrea Profile*, a government weekly, although the English version of his speech was less complete.

All of Eritrea's independent Protestant denominations were closed by government order in May 2002 and their congregations forbidden to worship, even in their homes. At present, at least 373 Protestant Christians are confirmed jailed and subjected to severe torture across the country for refusing to recant their faith, some for nearly two years.

On February 10, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom urged Secretary of State Colin Powell to include Eritrea for the first time on this year's list of 11 countries designated by the U.S. State Department as "severe violators" of religious liberty. In its summation, the commission declared:

"The government of Eritrea in the past two years has cracked down on members of various religious groups, including the closure of all churches not belonging to officially recognized religious denominations, the arrest of participants at prayer meetings and other gatherings, and the imprisonment of armed forces members found in possession of certain religious literature. The State Department reports that over 300 persons are in jail because of their membership in unregistered religious groups."

Danish church verger who believes in reincarnation sues for reinstatement

Sara Holt Andersen

Copenhagen (ENI) – Denmark's High Court is finalizing its judgement over the expulsion of a church verger who believes in reincarnation, and who has sued the government's Ministry of Church Affairs, because he wants to be reinstated.

In 1994, Steen Ribers was expelled from Denmark's Lutheran church because he – as a member of a church parish council and as a church official – said he believed in reincarnation, and wrote and talked about it in public. If the judgement goes against Ribers, one in four women and one in 10 men who are members of the church could in principle expect to be expelled from the church, because they apparently believe in reincarnation.

"Never in the history of the Danish church has a pastor withdrawn the membership of a person against the will of [church] members," Ribers told ENI.

"It's not Christianity"

Bishop Karsten Nissen says the judgement is of great importance for the future of the church.

"If Ribers is reinstated, we won't be able to protect the confession of the church," he explains, elaborating on State involvement in church matters. "Since the Ref-



Bishop Karsten Nissen

ormation [in 1536], state and church have been close, and so we have no distinction between internal and external church affairs."

The verger, whose duties include acting as a church caretaker, sees the court's judgement as a last chance for him to remain in the church, but he believes reincarnation is compatible with the teaching of Jesus according to the Gospel. "Through spiritual development, that lasts many lives, we get closer to God," he asserts. "As God's representative, Jesus helps us, but he doesn't take away our sins. We are ourselves responsible for our deeds."

But Nissen has rejected Ribers' claims. "It's not Christianity," says

the bishop. "Jesus Christ is not merely a model. He is the Son of God, who bears our trespasses."

On April 5, the High Court is to deliver its judgement about whether the theological basis for Ribers' exclusion from the church was fair. Those watching the case expect it may go all the way to the Supreme Court, Denmark's highest.

The quandary for the church is that the verger is not the only church member believing in development through many lives. A total of 84 percent of the Danish population are members of the church, and one survey has reportedly shown that one in every four women and one in every 10 men believe in reincarnation.

To avoid similar cases affecting church members, Bishop Nissen wants to distinguish between ordinary members and people employed by the church. "Employees should not be allowed to actively work against the basis of the church," he noted.

At the same time Bishop Nissen thinks the church ought to be able to define its own criterion for membership. But he also says: "People who cannot be members of the church should not be shut out of the congregation or from communion. It would be un-Danish."

Danish Christians instruct Muslims in pastoral care at interfaith centre

Sara Holt Andersen

Copenhagen (ENI) – A Danish interfaith centre has come up with a novel form of cooperation between different faiths in which Christian pastors are to instruct a group of Muslim volunteers – including imams or Islamic community leaders – in pastoral care.

The program will enable Muslims to provide free spiritual counseling to patients of their own faith in hospitals. The originators of the initiative, The Islamic-Christian Study Center, hope the initiative will spread to rest homes and prisons.

"As a Muslim it's not especially appropriate to talk to a Christian pastor about the meaning of life and death," hospital chaplain the Rev. Tom Andersen Kjaer told Copenhagen's daily Christian newspaper, *Kristeligt Dagblad*. He came to know the needs for spiritual guidance among Muslim patients as a chaplain and this experience gave him the idea of teaching Muslim volunteers about pastoral care.

"Normally among Muslims, the family network, and not the religious network, would help people in critical situations," Lissie Rasmussen, the leader of the Islamic-Christian Study Center was quoted

saying in the Christian daily. "But many [Muslim] refugees are without a family to lean on. That's why the volunteer group is so important."

A group of four imams and six Muslim laymen are already visiting patients in different hospitals, but they need instruction in what they need to do. To begin with the Christian pastors will teach the group and others interested about psychology and common psychological disorders.

The first course in spiritual counseling starts in October. The Islamic-Christian Study Center in Copenhagen organizes the courses.

The centre, which was founded in Copenhagen in 1996 by local Christians and Muslims, is believed to be one of the first such centres in the world started jointly by Christians and Muslims.

Its aim is to build up positive relations between Muslims and Christians and thereby improve integration and coexistence in Denmark. This happens through education, counseling, research work and dialogue. Essential values are fellowship, equal worth and reciprocity.

Denmark's estimated 170 000 Muslims represent three percent of the country's 5.4 million population.

Reflection

Through my eyes

Sonya VanderVeen
Feddema

The day after I agreed to speak to students in grades 7 and 8 at Beacon Christian Elementary School about my childhood experiences in Korea for their week-long exploration of that nation, I received an important phone call. The refugee family from Sierra Leone that our church was sponsoring would be arriving in four days! Little did I realize how the two events would coincide.

During busy days filled with settling the family – a widowed mother and three school-aged children – I prepared for my presentation. I retrieved my old Seoul Foreign School yearbooks from the bedroom closet and read the redundant comments written by my peers. (You know the typical lines: Dear Sonya, It's been great knowing you. See you next year!) I gathered my Korean mementoes that have survived countless moves over forty years. I looked at photos which reminded me of what it was like to see post-war Korea through the eyes of a 9-year-old Canadian child who, up until then, had only traveled from her Bowmanville home on a chicken farm as far as the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto.

Korea, Canada, Sierra Leone

What brought me across the world to a land and people I knew nothing about and to an experience that would dramatically shape my life? In 1965 my dad, Peter Feddema, accepted a position as an agriculturalist for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee in Korea.

As I shared stories with the students about our family's cultural transition, I had two goals in mind. I wanted to impress on them that each of us – my parents, my four sisters one brother, and myself – saw Korea through our own eyes. Because they were older, what my parents saw and later remembered was different from what the children saw and remembered. What



In Korea, freedom of religion is practiced and churches are found across the country.

each saw was equally legitimate.

I also hoped to awaken the students' empathy by encouraging them to think about what it would be like to move to another country with a strange language, foods, religions, and cultural practices. Though they were unaware of it, after speaking to them I planned to give the family from Sierra Leone a tour through the school. One of the children would be enrolling in grade 8. I wondered, What did Canada look like to these refugee children? How would their culture influence the way they viewed us? Would they like what they saw?

With these goals in mind, I told the students about several of my formative experiences. Here's some of what I shared with them.

Becoming a visible minority

When we arrived in Korea, Mr. John Steensma picked us up at the Seoul airport. My siblings and I sat in the back of his Land Rover Jeep

rean people stroked our heads momentarily, smiling and speaking unintelligibly, at least to my ears. I had never considered myself an oddity. After all, the school and church I had attended in Bowmanville were populated with blonde Canadian-Dutch kids like myself.

Living amidst poverty

During our four year stay in Korea, I became acutely aware of poverty – poverty which I think was partially a consequence of the Korean War fought only twelve years earlier between South Korea and North Korea. Once I was home alone when a beggar came to our door. I could not turn the man away empty-handed. Filled with pity, I gave him a substantial amount of money from my mom's wallet. Upon receiving my gift, he bowed deeply. The joy on his wrinkled face filled me with delight. I'm not sure if my mom discovered that it was I who had emptied her wallet for charity's sake or whether she would have been angry with me if she had found out.

On another occasion when Mom and Dad took us on a picnic in the countryside, we stopped for lunch by a riverbed. Nearby I saw several haggard men with weather-beaten faces and grimy clothes crouching beneath a bridge. How could I enjoy my lunch while the men were obviously hungry? I asked my dad if I could give them the bag of apples we had brought along. He said that I could. The men's faces broke out in toothy grins as they took the bag from me.

One afternoon my sisters and I

helped out the small staff at an orphanage by cuddling babies. Nothing in my protected childhood prepared me for what I saw there. Listless children who had never known consistent love rested in row on row of cribs waiting to be fed or to have their soiled diapers changed. Some of the children responded to our attention with cooing and smiles. But one lethargic girl never moved. I lifted her out of the crib, sang to her, and cooed in her ear. No response. I desperately wanted her to smile, but she never did.

Orphans, maids, ancestors and village drums

Perhaps the most significant event for me was the arrival of a Korean orphan into our family. Driving home from church one Sunday, my parents and Elvinah Spoelstra, the director of the Christian Adoption Program of Korea, were talking quietly in the front seat of the jeep. Suddenly, Mom turned to us children in the back seat and asked, "Would you like to have a baby move in with us?" We shouted our approval.

Within days, 3-week-old Suzy arrived. We converted an empty dresser drawer with a soft white pillow for a mattress into a bed for her. Weeks turned into months. When Suzy was thirteen months old, an American couple adopted her. My mother's willingness to take in an orphan child, even though she was busy with her own family in a land far from home, made an enduring impact on me.

Many other things also influenced me: attending Seoul Foreign School with 27 nationalities rep-



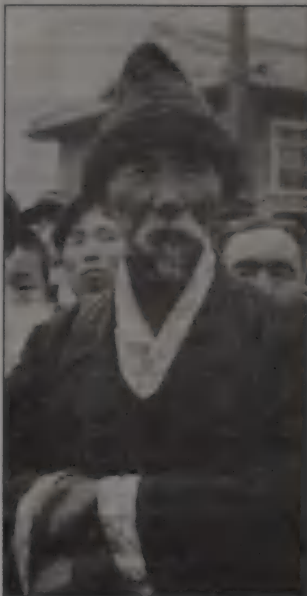
The Feddema family leaving for Korea in August, 1965. Front: Sharon Yvonne, Tom. Back: Edna, Nell, Sonya, Nellie, Peter

and my parents sat up front with him. Careening between potholes and over rough terrain, he brought us safely to our new home in an enclosed compound where several missionary families lived.

Throughout the drive, I couldn't take my eyes off Mr. Steensma as he spoke animatedly with my parents. Why? Because he steered with his prosthetic limbs, hooks attached to wooden arms. When he was a teenager, he had lost both arms in an accident. His missionary work involved fitting amputees with artificial limbs and helping restore their dignity to them. Mr. Steensma made a lasting impression on me because his disability was not a handicap as far as I could tell.

For the first time in my life, on Seoul's crowded streets and in its market places, I was a visible minority. In a sea of countless black-haired people, my fair blonde hair, and that of my siblings, gleamed conspicuously. Sometimes the Ko-

Reflection



Korean elder at citizens' meeting in Pusan

resented in its student body, worshipping with Christians from other denominations for the first time in my life, feeling the uncertainty and tension created by the 11 month capture of the USS Pueblo by North Korea in January 1968, having a maid work for our family, playing with my friends among the hillocks in ancestral burial grounds, watching families bring food to their ancestors' graves, and hearing the village drums beating to supposedly ward off evil spirits from a sick child.

After I finished speaking to the students, I asked them to write down their answers to three questions: How do you think you would feel if you moved from Canada to another country, and why would you feel this way? What would you miss about Canada? What would

you look forward to as you prepared to move?

Many wrote that they would feel lonely, scared, and upset about having to leave their country. They explained how learning a new language and becoming accustomed to different food would be a challenge. Others shared that a move to another culture would be an awesome adventure, filled with new possibilities. Whatever their responses, I hoped that my presentation helped them become more empathetic towards newcomers. After all, they were about to receive a new classmate who saw the world through her unique Sierra Leonean eyes.

Here are a few of the students' responses to the questions that I gave them. I asked the students not to sign their responses.

If I moved away from Canada....

I would feel very confused, uncomfortable, and different.

I would be excited, but also afraid because you never know what will happen.

I think I would miss certain things, but not others. I also would probably be excited because I think change is good.

I would look forward to the change, making new friends, and seeing new, amazing things.

I would be kind of scared because I wouldn't know anyone and I wouldn't know the language. I would feel this way because their ways and culture would be very different.

I would feel awkward, confused, and out of place. I would feel this way because I would be new to their culture.

Learn to retreat and embrace silence

Lisa M. Petsche

"Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence." — Max Ehrmann, *Desiderata*.

Generally I'm pleased about the arrival of spring, with its milder temperatures and increased daylight. But one thing I'll miss about winter is the relative silence.

While I'll enjoy being able soon to open windows and let in fresh air, this also means letting in a variety of noises. I'm not referring to the sounds of nature, but rather to human-generated sounds: voices, music (some people can't seem to do anything outdoors without it), portable phones, lawn mowers, power tools, motorcycles and various sounds wafting (or blaring) out of neighbors' homes. Year-round noises like barking dogs, sirens, trains and airplanes suddenly become too loud to easily tune out, annoying us and sometimes even startling us out of sleep.

Yes, it's amazing how much external noise exists in our lives, especially if we live in the city.

Then there's the ever-present noise within our homes, including from conversations (or squabbles), pets, toys with sound chips, telephones, televisions (in some households they're rarely turned off), video games, stereos and household appliances.

There is also internal noise resulting from our busyness: countless ideas, questions, worries and plans whirling around in our minds, competing for our attention.

Seeking silence and solitude

What am I getting at? In today's fast-paced, high-tech culture where instant communication and constant stimulation are the norm, silence and solitude are hard to come by.

Unfortunately, retreat from worldly demands tends to be equated with lack of productivity, and so is undervalued, when in reality it has many benefits.

Temporary withdrawal provides opportunities to get in touch with our innermost thoughts and feelings; reflect on our experiences; evaluate our priorities; contemplate the future; and communicate intimately with God, opening our mind and heart to his presence and listening to what he wants to say to us. It's a necessity, not a luxury, as Jesus

himself exemplified.

Many of us are uncomfortable with silence, though. Filling every waking moment with noise and activity has become a bad habit that's hard to break. Or perhaps we're attempting to avoid facing a problem or truth that might necessitate some serious soul-searching and life changes.

But with faith and persistence we can overcome awkwardness or fear and reap the benefits of silence. In *Peaceful Thoughts for Busy Women* (Meredith Publishing Group), editor Jean Lowe states, "to be truly peaceful, I must practice. I can't expect the kind of serenity that I seek to just sweep over me."

To illustrate, when I began yoga classes in January, I found it hard to engage in deep relaxation, unable to clear my mind after a hectic day at work. But eventually I got better at it, learning to focus on my breathing and tune out everything else, until now it's almost second nature.

Turn it off

Finding quiet time is especially difficult when you're a parent of young children. But even 15 minutes a day can be beneficial.

Some ways to build silence into everyday life include: learning meditation or deep relaxation techniques; taking up yoga or Tai Chi; waking up earlier than the rest of your family and savoring the tranquility; foregoing music and the media while getting ready for work, commuting, performing household chores, exercising or preparing for bed (exception: for some people, soothing, instrumental music — often incorporating sounds of nature — can help to achieve a state of tranquility); reducing TV use in your home (check out www.tv-turnoff.org for inspiration and consider participating in TV-Turnoff Week, April 19-25); turning off the phone for a period of time; creating a sacred space where you feel relaxed and peaceful; taking a walk and leaving your cell phone or pager at home; spending time in nature; and engaging in spiritual reading followed by reflection. The latter is a great way to begin or end the day.

Learning to retreat and embrace silence will help us to properly care for ourselves — enabling us to properly care for loved ones, stay on track as Christians and deepen our relationship with God. We have nothing to lose, and everything to gain.



Street scene in Seoul in the 1960s

Remembering Your Heritage: Researching and Writing a Congregational History

Quite a few Christian Reformed congregations have already written histories to mark their 50th anniversaries and many more will be doing so in the near future. If you're looking for guidance in how to go about it, a booklet is available: *Remembering Your Heritage: Researching and Writing a Congregational History* by A.A. den Otter. Den Otter, a graduate of Dordt College, is Professor of History at Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland. The booklet was created for the Presbyterian Church in Canada but it will serve just as well for use in the CRC by

adding a couple more archival resources for those eager to do a little more digging.

It's only 18 pages long and costs \$2.00. You can purchase it from:

The Book Room
The Presbyterian Church in Canada
50 Wynford Drive
North York, Ontario M3J 1J7



Life

On a Steel Horse I Ride

Ron de Boer

My first bike was a red one-speed with rusty tire rims and yellowing handle grips. I suppose at one time it looked liked that sparkling gem the father in the classic Canadian Tire commercial hoisted out of the back of the pick-up for his son. My bike had probably been picked up at a flea market or farm auction.

Every spring I rolled it out of the tractor shed, oiled the chain, pumped air in the tires, washed off the fender, and polished the reflector. Then I hopped on and headed for the top of the laneway of our farm. Once there, I lowered my chin to the handlebars and pedaled as fast as I could, leaning to one side as I approached the barn, dropping a foot and allowing a plume of dust to explode off the back tire. There's nothing like skidding your bike tire in the gravel to make a boy feel like a man.

Sometimes I just held the bike there against my thigh and looked at the back tire angled flat to the driveway, admiring the swath in the gravel fanning out away from me. Or I'd ride onto the lawn and in one motion, lay the bike down so that the back tire continued rotating as I walked away from it – kind of like a horse snorting and twitching its tail after its rider hops off mid canter for a drink at the saloon.

There's nothing finer than the breeze in your face on a spring day riding the bike that's been hibernating in the shed all winter. To the rest of the world it was a one speed with rusted handlebars; to a ten year-old boy when the ice was breaking up in the creek, it was a Harley Davidson.

Bikes and spring

Bikes must feel the exhilaration of a spring day, too. They stretch their handlebars at the first hint of sunlight then work out the kinks in their chains then beg you to stand up and pump like you were wearing the yellow shirt at the Tour de France. A bike may always look like a bike, but it isn't truly a bike until someone's making its tires whirl on the asphalt.

One spring when the ditch water was still high, my older brother, Ken, convinced my younger brother, Doug, and I to sneak our bikes out, before the annual nod of approval from our mother, and ride with him to one of the side roads a couple of kilometers from our farm. The sight of the ramp awaiting us, along with a couple of grinning friends of my brother's, should have been enough to make us turn around and go watch Get Smart re-runs on the CBC, but we coasted right up to them. How often did your older brother ask you to pop wheelies and fly over a ramp with his friends?

Dumb question.

On Doug's second run to the ramp,



one of my brother's friends thought it would be hilarious to ride across his path to scare him. Doug swerved, caught the back tire of the offending bike and was launched horizontally...into the ditch. In any other body of water it would have been a wonderful dive. But in freezing cold ditch water in early March, my brother flailed and screamed like an animal in a trap.

We pulled Doug out and had to face my mother's wrath when she caught us sneaking him up to his bedroom with his clothes clinging flat to his body and his hair plastered to his forehead. By that time we were too old for the wooden spoon, but our bikes were locked back in the tractor shed for an additional two weeks as punishment.

Letting go

Bikes have always held a mix of danger and excitement for me. You wipe out taking a turn too tightly or you hold a

wheelie for four seconds while your older brother smiled approvingly. When you ride as recklessly as most kids do, you bike a fine line between injury and accomplishment.

Riding a bike is one of the few skills in life that is near impossible to master, but once mastered is impossible to forget. I'm always nervous when I teach my kids to ride a bike for the first time. This spring our youngest is learning to ride a two wheeler – the same little pink bike her three older sisters earned their wings on. Letting go of the seat when she starts to pedal is difficult for me. "Don't let go," she yells, her helmet falling over her eyes. "I've got you – you're safe," I say.

"You're letting go!" she yells. Her front wheel starts to wobble, the bike begins to swerve. "You're letting go!"

She is like Peter attempting to walk on water; she has little faith in the bike.

The big step of course is my letting go. I have to take my hand off the seat and stop

running. Away she goes, down the sidewalk, her little body hunched forward, her elbows sticking deliberately out to the sides. She's doing it!

"Keep pedaling," I yell. But then, sensing the falling away of my voice, she starts to wobble and swerve...straight into our neighbor's hedge.

Tears. Band-Aids. A Popsicle. Maybe again tomorrow.

When she finally learns to ride on her own, I will have that little pink bike, a CCM Firefly, purchased at Canadian Tire some 13 years ago, bronzed and hung in the family room. I tell this to Karen who is always nostalgic about obsolete cribs and toys no longer relevant to our house.

"That thing's ready for the scrap heap," she replies. "The spokes are like spaghetti; the tires look like they're ready to explode."

"She's going to learn to ride on the Firefly," I insist, mumbling something about balance and wholeness. "She'll be a failure her whole life if she doesn't learn on the Firefly like her sisters."

Crashing

I have had my share of riding into the hedges of life. There was the time I caught my older brother biking forlornly past the neighbor girl's house. When I threatened I'd tell the girl's sister my brother was in love, he finally agreed to fulfill his long ago made promise to race me down the laneway.

I was fine as we pushed off and began pumping down the slight graveled decline. Then in one of life's weird little jump-cut, film-edits, I found myself prone in the ditch with an elixir of blood and gravel swirling around in my mouth. The part I don't remember, but which has been told to me many times, was that I had hit some loose gravel and had screamed like a cat in spring. I spent the next two weeks wearing a scab-moustache, my upper lip protruding like an opossum's snout.

My brother was so disgusted I got blood on his running shoes when he pulled me out of the ditch, he said he'd probably never bike with me for the rest of his life. He's now in his forties and has kept his promise.

Then there was the time I was on the receiving end of a hit-and-run when I was fifteen. I was biking down Queen street in Chatham, inhaling the burning leaves, listening to the birds singing in the trees, on my way to a friend's house after a day in the fields of Kent County de-tasseling corn, when the next thing I knew, I was lying on my back. When I opened my eyes, four or five adults' faces stared down at me. My left shoe was off my foot. There was blood. Lots of it. And my whole body ached.

The shoe had literally been ripped off my foot from the force of the hit and was

Life

later found by one of the police officers some fifty feet from my bike. The car had crunched the back of the bike right to my seat; the fire hydrant had crunched the front of the bike right to the handle bars. Somehow, miraculously, I had been thrown from the bike and had avoided both car and fire hydrant.

The police eventually caught my assailants. A Datsun full of teenagers. All drunk – including the driver.

Holding on

Sometimes when I hold the seat of my daughter's bike, I don't want to let go; I want to stay behind her and fend off every Datsun that will threaten her. I want her to keep her training wheels on so she never wobbles and crashes into prickly bushes.

But alas, the next morning she's eating breakfast in her pajamas and bike helmet. She's ready to get back on her steel horse. She's five and all her friends in senior kindergarten have already mastered the two-wheeler. She's become a playground outcast. Training wheels are soooooo last year, Dad.

When you're a kid, the bike measures how old you're getting. One day, you're father or mother is holding one handle grip and running beside you. The next day, your parents are watching from the window as you bike up and down the sidewalk. Then you're allowed out of the sight of the house.

Before you know it, you're biking to school and through subdivisions and you get to decide whether to turn left or right or stop at the store for a cream soda. When you get your lock, you've really grown up. The bike lock means you'll be traveling somewhere where you'll have to park your bike; it means you have a bike worth someone else wanting to steal it.

Pake and the Nazis

My favorite bike story is the one told in Karen's family about her Grandfather, Pake Wiersma, back in the old country before he was a Pake. During the war, while he was making deliveries of freshly baked bread and pastries, a couple of Nazi soldiers demanded the use of his bike. He refused to give it to them, and when they agreed he could finish his rounds before they confiscated it, he raced home, got out his wrenches and disassembled the entire bike right down to the washers and bolts.

When the soldiers arrived to collect their bike, Pake opened the shed door and showed them the frame, the seat sitting next to it, the handle bars, the fenders, the tires and the little pile of bolts.

"It is broken?" one of the Nazis asked.

"I'm afraid so," Pake said sincerely, wiping grease on his bakery pants. The Nazis looked at him skeptically then left. Pake, of course, put his bike together to deliver the muffins and cookies.

From two wheels to four

So, the five year-old mastered her bike this morning. She pedals as far as the house with the hedge, gets off, turns the bike around, and bikes back to our driveway. Over and over again, she bikes, getting stronger and stronger with each trip. It's as if she's growing up right in front of me. Wasn't it yesterday when the fifteen year-old, making motorcycle sounds, pedaled that little pink bike up and down the hallway of our town house?

It occurs to me I'll probably never again teach another human being how to ride a bike.

Maybe I'll bronze that little pink Firefly, after all. Mount it on the wall in the family room beside the sports pictures. The kids will all show their friends the bike they learned to ride so many years ago. The friends will all be impressed. The kids will thank their father for his wonderful bike-riding tips. Probably mention it at graduation speeches years from now.

Just then the fifteen year-old plops herself down beside me on the front porch. "I can't believe I rode that ugly little thing," she says. "Why in the world did you buy pink? Pink's so...prissy. I couldn't wait to pass that bike on and get a new one."

Then she announces we had better buy a second car soon because she's writing her G-1 driver's license in less than a year and she's going to need wheels.

"And one more thing," she says, spinning a basketball on her finger, "We'd better get something cool because nobody's caught dead driving a mini-van anymore."

No hands

I count to ten.

Then I say, "Do you remember when I taught you how to ride your bike?"

"Dad, nobody remembers when they learned to ride their bike."

"You mean you feel like you've always known how to ride your bike?" I say.

"I can't imagine not knowing how to ride a bike," she says. She squints at me.

Sensing a life lesson coming, she stops spinning the basketball and positions herself for escape.

"If we'd never taught you, you'd never know how to ride a bike," I say.

"Who doesn't teach their kid how to ride a bike?"

"You'd be surprised," I say.

I open my mouth to say something about faith and God and how, like riding a bike, you don't ever consider why the bike stays upright when you're riding it, just like you don't question God when you know he's real and working in the world, especially if you've been taught by parents from the beginning he's real. A person doesn't think about breathing. A fish doesn't think about swimming. A

Lessons from a newborn Madeleine

Leona Enns

Forget kindergarten and grade school. Forget high school and university. All I really need to know I am learning from my baby. She can neither speak nor write, yet, for better or worse, her example tells me this:

1) When it comes to clothing, comfort comes first. As long as it's warm and clean, what does it matter if it's the wrong color or style?

2) Talking is over-rated. More important to smell a person's scent, feel skin against skin, be wrapped in the sound of someone's voice.

3) Pooping is a triumph. If you can master the art of feeding at one end of your body and evacuating waste at the other, you are off to a good start.

4) Crying is necessary. It's never too soon to let the world know you're here.

5) When in doubt, suck. Sucking is the solution to almost every problem you will encounter in this world.

Baby-force

I'll say it again (with apologies to Robert Fulghum, author of *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*): All I really need to know I am learning from Madeleine, my three-week-old baby daughter who lies quietly beside me now on the bed, and who will probably need nursing soon, and who is the best thing that has ever happened to me.

Madeleine is my baby, our baby (referring to my husband George and myself), yet she is also every baby. She has the power to stop you in your tracks, to force revision of all your grown-up agendas, to challenge all the domestic and career imperatives you thought were set in stone.

She has the power to arrest your attention and summon you back into wonder and amazement, no matter how oblivious to the inherent sheen and sparkle of life you might have become.

From a foreign country

I may need to re-think the lessons Madeleine has taught me in the clear light of day. I write this in the wee hours of the morning, after all. Baby care interrupts my nights and makes all of my days hazy for lack of sleep.

Yet even this altered state of consciousness enlightens me. What it teaches me, despite all my years of fast-lane existence,

is this: Slow is beautiful. What could be more important right now than taking time for her? What could be more important than holding her close, filling her hungry little tummy with milk and calming her new-arrival fears?

A baby comes to us from a foreign country ("out of the everywhere, into the here," as novelist George MacDonald says) and presumably also experiences this Earth as a foreign land. Like any newcomer, a baby needs assistance but also offers us the gift of a new perspective.

Refreshed perceptions

If we are beginning to experience this world as "seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil," in the words of poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, what better remedy than a new baby or young child to help refresh our perception?

Cleansed and refreshed, my perception tells me this: Life is amazing. God's gifts are bountiful. And if I love my child, God loves me and all of his children more.

"Can you forget the baby at your breast and have no compassion on the child you have borne?" God asks in Isaiah 49:15 (as I write this, my baby begins to cry; the sound is difficult to ignore).

"Even if it is possible to imagine forgetting Madeleine," God says, "I will never forget you! I love you forever, like a mother loves her child, only better. You are mine."

"Tell me more!"

That is why I say, after picking her up and comforting her, that Madeleine teaches me. About pooping, crying and sucking, yes, but also about God. Day after day, like the sun, she pours forth speech. Night after night, like the stars, she pours forth knowledge and light.

"God is amazing," she says with each curl of her fingers, each feline stretch upon waking, even with each diaper she fills.

I can only agree. "Yes," I whisper back, knowing she will understand (she comes straight from God, after all). "Oh, yes, it is. Tell me everything you know. Tell me more!"

Madeleine Sofia Rose was born to Leona and George Enns on January 29, 2004. Now three and half months old, she lives with her mommy and daddy in St. Catharines, Ontario.

bird doesn't consider her wings. That's how faith works. In bikes. In God.

But this monologue goes unspoken for now. The five-year-old is squealing my name, and I instinctively jump to rescue her. Then I realize she is doing something extraordinary. She is lifting her hands off the handle grips and riding no hands for a

second before grabbing them again.

"Did you see that?" I say. "One hour and she's got total faith in that bike. She's not scared anymore."

The fifteen-year-old smiles genuinely. "Good job, Dad. Good job. Can you take me driving in a parking lot this afternoon?"

History

From Nijverdal to Nieuw Nijverdal: the centennial of a Dutch colony

Donald Sinnema

The Dutch community in the Granum-Monarch-Nobleford area of southern Alberta was the first Dutch settlement in this province, and the second in all of Canada. Since most of the early Dutch pioneers on the east side of this settlement came from the textile town of Nijverdal in the Dutch province of Overijssel, that part of the settlement came to be called Nieuw Nijverdal.

For about twenty years Nijverdalers immigrated to southern Alberta, usually a few each year, but two large groups immigrated in the spring of 1904 and in the spring of 1910. So 100 years ago this April the first group of Nijverdalers arrived to take up homesteads on the east side of the settlement; this month marks the centennial of the Dutch in the Monarch-Nobleford district.

Nijverdal

The town of Nijverdal (literally "industrious valley") lies in the center of Overijssel. In 1903 it had a population of about 3450. The area was very rural, but one industry dominated the town – the local cotton-weaving factory. English owned, the Koninklijke Stoomweverij was a steam powered weaving mill that employed many local folk, including children over twelve. For those working in the mill the hours were long, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., and the wages were barely at subsistence level. There was no hope for advancement, especially for large families.

New beginnings

The story begins in March 1892 when Jan Hendrik ter Telgte and his wife Fenneken emigrated from the Nijverdal area to Paterson, New Jersey, with his wife's family, the Willemsens. Then in early 1897 the ter Telgte family moved west and took up a homestead near Manhattan, Montana, where a rural Dutch settlement had been established in 1891.

In May 1903 Hendrikus ter Telgte (Jan's younger brother), who had worked as a weaver in the Nijverdal mill, emigrated to America with his wife and family. The family first stayed with his brother Jan at Manhattan, but in July or early August 1903 Hendrikus visited Leavings (later called Granum) in southern Alberta, and claimed a homestead east of the town, which had originated only a



The Nijverdal that was left behind

year before. Later in August Jan also visited Leavings and filed on an abandoned homestead a few miles from his brother's claim. He then returned to his family in Manhattan with the intention of selling his land there.

In January 1904 Hendrikus and his family moved north across the Canadian border to settle on their homestead. There they built a two-room shack where they lived with their four children.

Land rush to the prairies

This occurred in the midst of the great land rush to western Canada, as new homesteaders arrived by wagon or rail from the eastern provinces, the United States, and Europe. To encourage settlement of the prairies the Canadian government made free homesteads of 160 acres available to prospective farmers for a filing fee of \$10. Hendrikus ter Telgte's family was only the second Dutch family to settle in southern Alberta. Harm Emmelkamp (earlier from Groningen) and his family had been the first; in January or February 1903 they had come to Alberta from New Mexico and claimed a homestead east of Leavings.

How ter Telgte came to know about Emmelkamp is unknown, but there was contact. It was Harm who actually filed the claim on behalf of Hendrikus, only two miles from his own homestead. This was the beginning of the Dutch settlement in southern Alberta, and Hendrikus ter Telgte's family was the first of many Dutch immigrants who would arrive from Nijverdal.

First worship service

Meanwhile, in June 1903 Gerrit J. Withage, his wife, and two young sons emigrated from Nijverdal to Manhattan,

Montana. Gerrit too had been a weaver in Nijverdal and was a member of the Gereformeerde Kerk. The Withages linked up with fellow-Nijverdaler Jan ter Telgte who sold his farm at Manhattan, and together the two families crossed the border by train to join the tiny Dutch settlement at Leavings in early March 1904.

Since Jan had claimed an abandoned homestead, there was already a good house (24 x 24, with a 12 x 32 lean-to addition) on the property. The two families arrived at the house late on Saturday night, and the next morning Gerrit Withage led the families in worship. Years later Gerrit's son Chris recalled: "On Sunday, March 6, my father led the first religious meeting of Christian Reformed people in Alberta. How well I remember singing, 'Geloofd zij God met diepst ontzag,' and 'Hoe lieflijk, hoe vol heilgenot,' and at the close, 'Heer, ai! maak mij uwe wegen, door uw woord en Geest bekend.'"

The house still stands two miles south of the Granum CRC.

First wave of Nijverdalers

A week later a large group of 41 persons emigrated from the Nijverdal area to take up homesteads in the new Dutch settlement.

Everhardus (Evert) Aldus, who had been a Christian school teacher at Nijverdal, had taken the lead in exploring the prospects for immigrants in Canada, beginning in the spring of 1903. He received official brochures about the Canadian west that were published by the Canadian government, and he contacted D. Tréau de Coeli, the Antwerp-based agent of the Canadian government for Belgium and the Netherlands, who personally visited Nijverdal that fall to advise a group of ten prospective emigrants. Aldus checked American newspapers for market reports. He also wrote to former Nijverdaler Jan ter Telgte at Manhattan and found out that he had just returned from checking out homestead possibilities in Alberta. Based on his careful investigations Aldus concluded that western Canada was a better place for the group to immigrate to than the United States.

Since Hendrikus ter Telgte, who had only recently left Nijverdal, was already in Alberta, he was also contacted; the Veldhuis family, who were part of the group, wrote to him about when they expected to arrive at the train station in nearby Macleod.

Among the group of 41 were six families and two single men. Evert Aldus left with his wife and young son. With them were her brother Willem Stotijn, a shoemaker, and the family of another brother-in-law, Jacobus Nijhoff. A baker, Jacobus had delivered bread around Nijverdal on a cart pulled by a large dog. The group also included Hendrikus Veldhuis and his family; he had worked as a stoker in a Nijverdal creamery. Then there was the family of Johannes Huisman, who had worked in the cotton mill. From Heerde, west of Nijverdal, was the family of farmer Willem van Lohuizen; with them were his elderly mother and

brother Jan. Finally there was the large family of Jan Postman, who had been eking out a living on a small rented farm near Den Ham, just north of Nijverdal. He saw no future there for his seven sons. Of this group the Postmans were Gere-formeerd; all the others were Hervormd in church background.

Journey by ship and rail

On March 12, 1904, the group left Nijverdal by train for Rotterdam. There they boarded a former cattle boat that took them to Hull, England. By rail they crossed the country to Liverpool, where they set sail on the Ionian, an immigrant steamship of the Allan Line that had been put into service in 1901. With 988 persons on board, the Dutch group traveled in third class cabins. Crossing the Atlantic took ten days, eight of which brought rough seas in a heavy storm. There was a lot of sea-sickness. Aldus later wrote, "Our large ship was tossed up and down like a nutshell, and constantly danced and staggered like a drunken man."

They finally landed at Halifax on March 27, and from there they took a CPR colonial train across Canada. Due to lack of space the group had to split up at Medicine Hat, some going directly to Macleod over Lethbridge, the others taking a longer route over Calgary. After seven days on the train, both parties arrived at Macleod on April 3, Easter Sunday.

On arrival they were picked up from the train station by the ter Telgte brothers. The Postmans and Van Lohuizens at first stayed in the Immigration House in Macleod, the Veldhuis family in Hendrikus' shack, and the others were all taken into Jan ter Telgte's house. Since the Withage family was already there, for several weeks 26 persons, all Nijverdalers, crowded together in this house.

After arriving in Alberta Evert



History



Aldus sent regular letters to a newspaper back home in Nijverdal describing their voyage and life in this pioneer Dutch settlement.

Nieuw Nijverdal

No more homesteads were available among the Dutch settlers east of Leavings, so Withage and the new group from Nijverdal took up available homesteads ten miles farther east.

The first priority was to build a homestead shack. The one constructed by Hendrikus Veldhuis was typical. As described later in life by his daughter Gertrude: "My father bought a wagon, some lumber and fence posts and left early in the morning to travel the fifteen miles to our land. When he got there, he measured a piece of land 12 feet by 12 feet and put fence posts around it. Then he nailed boards all around it and after that the roof went on, without shingles of course....[A day or two later] my father cut an opening in the west wall for a door and a hole in the roof for the stove pipe. Then the stove was carried in, set up, and a fire started with cow chips...."

"Can you imagine five children and two parents living in a twelve by twelve shack? There was a bench through the middle to sit on, the beds were against the north wall, and the stove stood in the southeast corner. The table was against the

west wall and the south wall had a small window. This was our home for three years."

Since this group of homesteaders were all from the Nijverdal area, they soon called their side of the rural Dutch settlement "Nieuw Nijverdal."

In 1908 a new town was established on the edge of this side of the Dutch settlement, along a new railway line connecting Lethbridge and Macleod. Most of the Dutch settlers there requested to call it "Nijverdal," but the Canadian Pacific Railway had already named it "Monarch." After that the Dutch settlers on the east side identified themselves more and more with Monarch or Nobleford (another new town that originated in their district in 1909) and the name "Nieuw Nijverdal" soon fell into disuse.

Later Nijverdalers

After the arrival of the group of 41, each year more families and singles from Nijverdal immigrated to Alberta. For the most part, it was a web of family relationships that connected the early settlers and the newcomers. The next immigrants are typical examples.

In May or June 1904 the Roelof Van Dijk family, relatives of Jan ter Telgte, arrived from Paterson, New Jersey. Their homestead was

Hendrika Willemsen (my great-grandparents) arrived with their seven children from Manhattan, Montana, to homestead at Leavings near their relatives the Jan ter Telgte and Roelof van Dijk families. In 1903 the Willemsen family had moved from Paterson to Manhattan to start farming.

In May 1905 Rense Nijhoff, who had been a pig butcher in Nijverdal, came with his family to join his brother Jacobus and cousin Berend in Nieuw Nijverdal.

This family was accompanied by Albert Rutgers, a former weaver. He claimed a homestead at Nieuw Nijverdal, but also took up a different occupation than the other Nijverdalers there, who were all farmers. In the spring of 1908 Rutgers built a lean-to on his homestead shack to serve as a store for the local Dutch community. With a new delivery wagon he went around from farm to farm selling dry goods and groceries and delivering eggs and butter to market in Lethbridge. In 1911, after stores in the new towns of Monarch and Nobleford created nearby competition, he sold his property and returned home to the Netherlands.

Nijverdal CRC

In 1905 the Christian Reformed Church made efforts to establish a local congregation in the Dutch

settlement at Nieuw Nijverdal and Leavings since some of the settlers were still members of the Christian Reformed Church in Manhattan, Montana. In November a local congregation was organized and adopted the name "Nijverdal Christian Reformed Church." This was the first CRC in Canada. Of the original membership of six families and five individuals, four of the families and three individuals hailed from Nijverdal.

Most settlers of Hervormd background attended services of this church but did not join; in 1909 they organized a church of their own, the Reformed Church of Monarch. This congregation too consisted almost completely of former Nijverdalers.

In February 1911 the Nijverdal Christian Reformed Church divided into two congregations because its members in the Monarch and Granum districts (Leavings changed its name to Granum in 1907) lived too far apart to conveniently worship together. The two congregations were then named the "Granum Christian Reformed Church" and "Monarch Christian Reformed Church." This marked the end of "Nijverdal" as an official name in the Dutch community of southern Alberta.

A second wave

After several years of good harvests the Dutch homesteaders in the Monarch area began to enjoy some prosperity. So in November 1909 a group of seven men returned to the Netherlands for the winter, some of them young bachelors seeking a wife. Five were Nijverdalers. Their stay for several months in Nijverdal had a considerable impact on friends and relatives there, because when they returned to Alberta in the spring of 1910 a large new group of Nijverdal emigrants followed them

to Monarch.

A major reason for emigrating was discontent of these textile workers with working conditions at Nijverdal. But the specific occasion for this second wave of emigration was the glowing reports of farming in Alberta brought by the five returning visitors and their encouragement of friends and family to immigrate to Alberta for a better life than was possible in the Nijverdal textile mills.

When this new group of Nijverdalers arrived in Monarch, there were no homesteads left in this district, so many of them filed for homesteads near Carlstadt, about 60 kilometers northwest of Medicine Hat in the drier prairies of eastern Alberta. A few bought or rented land at Monarch or Grassy Lake. Most stayed around Monarch for the summer working on farms to earn some money and to learn about prairie farming; some worked at carpentry.

In September 1910 most of these new Nijverdal families and young men left Monarch to settle on their homesteads at Carlstadt. These settlers soon called their rural community "New Holland." But this settlement never really prospered. After years of crop failure the Dutch community there dispersed in 1925. Some returned to the Monarch area.

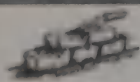
Northeastern Groningen also sent a good many immigrants to the Dutch settlement of Granum-Monarch-Nobleford; other families came from elsewhere in the Netherlands, many of them arriving after settling for a time in Vesper, Wisconsin, and northwest Iowa. However, it was Nijverdal that was the largest source of early immigrants and it long shaped the character of this Dutch settlement in Alberta.

*MONARCH 1912 PICTURES COURTESY OF THE ALBERTA GLENBOW FOUNDATION
NIJVERDAL PICTURE FROM WEB SITE: HTTP://WWW.HUUSNIEUW-SASD



Early threshing rig on W. J. Van Lohuizen farm

Culture



Building Trust

Vicky Van Andel, Ed.

The Shepherdess



Shepherdess walking her sheep in the Andes.

The brightly dressed woman slid down the sandy embankment and onto the dusty mountain path. I noticed she was holding on to a heavy rope. Suddenly several sheep appeared from behind her, peering over the ridge. The sheep pulled and tugged at the rope and then followed the woman down the hill.

Behind these sheep followed a whole flock of sheep, without any ropes, hopping and skipping down the sandy slope. A dog barked alongside trying to keep the flock together. The shepherdess crossed the path to the other side. She laughed and waved at us and climbed up the hill to guide her flock to greener pastures. Her little boy was by her side.

The Good Shepherd

This scene played itself out before me while I was high up in the Andes mountains of Ecuador. As North Americans we don't often get to see a flock of sheep grazing on the hillside. I have only seen a few of them in my entire life, and only during my travels in Europe. The first time I actually saw a flock of sheep with a shepherd was when I was living in Germany.

One day, while sitting in my living room, I suddenly heard strange noises coming from outside the open window. I walked over to see what was going on and to my utter amazement I saw a flock of sheep passing by along the railroad tracks. A shepherd herded them along. He had a beard, and wore a classic, brown cape over his shoulders. He carried a crooked staff. The sight imprinted on my mind. Each time since then when I see sheep with a shepherd I get an almost spiritual feeling of awe.

This awe is connected to my image of Jesus as the

Good Shepherd leading his sheep to green pastures. Jesus guides his people, protects them and ultimately redeems them. The shepherd walking past the open window with his sheep offered me a visual image of Jesus, my shepherd and savior.

Women shepherds

Seeing the shepherdess in Ecuador affected me in that same spiritual way. I was especially struck by the image of the shepherd as a woman leading her sheep. I saw her laughing and enjoying herself. She radiated a sense of freedom and openness. I noticed her front teeth were missing and it struck me that that did not take away from her striking beauty.

There were more shepherdesses in Ecuador. I met a shepherdess watching her sheep in the fields while her three children played in the grass nearby. She carried a skein of wool over her arm and as she was walking in the fields she rolled the wool into a ball. "That's for knitting," she explained to me in Spanish while gesturing with her hands. She pulled up her overskirt and showed me the beautifully hand knitted underskirt she was wearing.

The people in Ecuador love bright col-

ors. Especially in their clothes. They coordinate colors in stunning ways, combining bright blue with green, and orange with purple or red. Clothes are worn in layers because the temperature difference between day time and night time is quite great. Women often wear three skirts, a blouse, a scarf and a poncho, and all the layers in different colors. They also wear hats. It is very picturesque to see these colorfully dressed women working in the fields against a background of yellow and brown checkered hills and mountains!

Most of the women I met in Ecuador were poor. They live off the land and sell their goods on markets or in small stores along the streets. They wash clothes in streams running down from the mountains. They live in huts with thatched roofs and cook on wood-burning pits. They are surrounded by small children dressed up just as colorfully as they are themselves.

Fixed roles

I had the opportunity to go to Ecuador this past January as a member of a Medical Mission team. My job was to assist the dentist. We worked with children in schools in the mountains. When my week with the medical team was over, I visited several other remote villages further up in the Andes. I had another mission job to do there. It consisted of bringing 57 lambs to people living in remote villages in the mountains for them to raise for the wool. These were lambs donated by residents of Emmanuel Home for seniors in Edmonton. To do that, I met up with Rob and Betty Wood who are the CRWRC workers in Ecuador, and with them I traveled to the villages in the mountains in central Ecuador.

We had a good time there and saw interesting things. The people up there do not discuss the roles of women and men in society. The issues that occupy them are primarily related to making a living. The options the people in Ecuador have are very limited. People are poor and their lives are geared towards basic survival. Their roles and tasks are carved out. Educational opportunities are limited. While most people are literate, many are barely so. Some schools have only one room with one teacher for all grades.

I saw women doing laundry in rivers. I saw them spinning wool with their hands as they were walking down the street. The women in Ecuador know how to knit, to weave, to crochet and to sell. They know how to shear sheep. They go out in the field, cut the grain, carry it home on their backs. They thresh it behind their houses. They



carry their sleeping children on their backs, snuggled and tied up in ponchos.

Sadness

While life seems to have a clear pattern for the women in Ecuador, and women seem to know their roles, I saw that there were issues. The shepherdess truly appeared joyful as she was keeping watch over her flock in the mountains, but there were many women who seemed to have an air of sadness about them. I saw it in their large brown eyes.

I keep thinking about that. I try to figure out why that is so. Maybe life is hard for them. Physically they definitely do work very hard. But maybe there are other reasons. Maybe women are more aware of what is happening in the rest of the world. Maybe they see opportunities they are missing out on. Many people in the mountains have television, even those living in huts in the Andes. Modern technology is bringing the whole wide world close to them. I wonder how it affects them and their deeply ingrained traditions. I wonder if it is changing them.

I've been home for several months now. I still carry the spirits of the women of Ecuador in my heart. I also keep the women in my prayers. I am enriched by the memory of them.

But what can I do for them? It has to be more than giving them the pictures they allowed me take of them, their children and the beautiful scenery. I don't know what I can do for now, except perhaps share my experiences with other women. So that's what I am doing. The women of Ecuador will remain in my prayers. Especially the shepherdess coming down the mountain that day.

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via fax at 1-780-473-0970, or e-mail: vickyv@telus.net



Shepherdess with her children in front of her house.

Church

Pastors supporting pastors

Abram Huyser-Honing

Good pastors are learners as well as teachers. And sometimes the best people they can learn from – and with – are other pastors, as four groups of Canadian pastors participating in the Christian Reformed Church's Peer Learning Group program are finding out.

In their monthly meetings, members of two Hamilton, ON groups alert one another to the Holy Spirit's work. Pastors in a third Ontario group are sharpening their preaching skills. And pastors in Edmonton, AB bounce ideas off each other about how to include everyone from toddlers to senior citizens in worship. In all the groups, the meeting of minds sparks deeper learning and more urgent calls to action than individual study could.

The pastors have the time and resources to study together thanks to Peer Learning Group grants from the CRC's office of Sustaining Pastoral Excellence. The one-year grants cover travel costs, study materials, workshop registration, and pulpit fees for substitute preachers.

Welcoming the Holy Spirit

The Hamilton-area groups tackle issues often left by the wayside in CRC congregations: How does the Holy Spirit work in a congregation? Does speaking in tongues fit with Reformed theology?

For Rev. Erick Schuringa (Immanuel CRC, Brampton, ON), those questions aren't just academic. Several years ago, while doing personal devotions, he began speaking what he calls "a personal prayer language." "I just let my tongue go and started speaking a language I had never heard," he said. At the same time he felt a deep sensation of being in God's presence and being loved by him, he said.

Monthly Peer Learning Group meetings help Rev. Schuringa put such experiences in perspective. For one thing, talking with other pastors who've had equally intense encounters with the Holy Spirit is a good reminder that spiritual gifts are exactly that – gifts – and not causes for undue pride, he said.

Discussing readings like the CRC's 1973 report on Neopentecostalism, listening to guest speakers, and attending conferences together help the pastors locate their individual concepts of the Spirit within the framework

of Christian tradition.

Group member Al Wolters, a religion professor at Redeemer College, says the charismatic movement's "excesses and frequent theological misconceptions" should not keep Calvinists from embracing its strengths. Both John Calvin and Abraham Kuyper, he notes, have been called "theologians of the Holy Spirit."

"The more we study it, the less unusual it becomes," said Rev. Schuringa. "The Spirit has been working like this through the ages; we've just been ignoring him."

Hamilton pastors are remedying that ignorance in the sanctuary as well as the study. Rev. Bart Velthuizen, (Hagersville's Community CRC, Hagersville, ON), a member of the second Hamilton Peer Learning Group, recently preached a well-received, two-month sermon series on what scriptures from Genesis to Ephesians say about the Holy Spirit.

Last summer Rev. Rich Grift and the elders at Hope CRC, Brantford, ON, led a healing service that was so popular it lasted over two hours. No one was healed immediately, but several reported complete or partial improvement in following weeks; another found a treatment that eased her chronic pain. And the "joyful spirit of peace and unity" pervading the service was a blessing in itself, said Rev. Grift.

To-the-point preaching

Friction is required to sharpen a blade. The five Ontario pastors in "The Preaching Group" want their sermons to cut to the heart, so as they critique one another's sermons in their monthly meetings, they give praise where it's due, but don't hesitate to point out faults.

Sometimes it hurts. "But we all know we love each other, and there's a great level of respect," said Rev. Peter Janssens (Lucknow CRC, Lucknow, ON). And it pays off. Rev. Janssens said that since he joined this Peer Learning Group he's been more intentional about looking for the theme of each text he preaches on. "I think, from the comments people have given me, that the sermons are tighter," he said.

The group also collaborates on sermon series. The pastors email outlines to each other, with the understanding that each is free to appropriate as much as he wants from his colleagues. "The key is that

people get it, not that we get credit for writing it," said Rev. Janssens.

In December they all preached from an Advent series they wrote together; later they submitted the outlines to the journal *Reformed Worship* so other pastors could use them too.

One happy result of preaching from the same series at the same time is that when members of one pastor's congregation visit another's, which happens often, since all five are within an hour's drive of each other, they don't miss a beat.

The Preaching Group has also shored up members facing tragedy in their congregations. This past year pastors in the group had to deal with a car accident that killed two teens, the suicide of an elderly person, and the drowning of a toddler.

"How do you give a good word from the Lord at times like these?" said Rev. Jack DeVries, (Bethel CRC, Listowel, ON). "We discussed the issue and even listened to and critiqued a sermon done at one of the funerals. It was encouraging and very helpful to have the peer support that helped us put into words God's word for a hurting people."

A church for all ages

3,500 kilometers west, members of Canada's fourth Peer Learning Group have dubbed themselves "Joel's Dream Team." The moniker refers to Joel 2:28, "your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions," and the group is dedicated to making the voices of the youngest daughters and the oldest men heard in congregational worship.

These Alberta pastors have collectively read a small library's worth of books on the subject, and they're led by Karen Wilk, an expert on intergenerational worship and the coordinator of Children and Youth Ministry in the CRC. They've even led a conference themselves, and in July they'll lead part of a Calvin Institute of Christian Worship conference in Denver, CO.

For Joel's Dream Team, the occasional youth service isn't enough. Unless attempts to include children and youth in worship are rooted in something central to their identity as church members, said Rev. Cecil VanNijenhuis, of First CRC, Edmonton, AB, "some of it is really cosmetic."

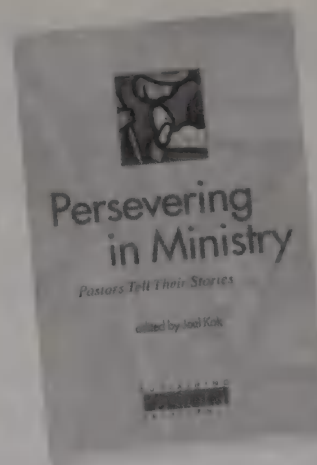
See Pastors page 19....



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Opinion

Mainly on Money

Ante up: the growing cost of energy consumption

Ontario's electrical system is in trouble. The unconservative Conservatives are partly to blame. A committee of three wise men headed by former deputy Prime Minister John Manley, recommends that we opt for more nuclear.

Of course, natural gas, which was seen as the ideal power source even a few years ago, suddenly, without warning, proved to be no longer available in large enough quantities to keep us from freezing in the dark. Nobody had counted on that. And with so many promises broken already, the Ontario Liberal Government can ill afford to back out of the closing of the coal-fired plants. By process of elimination – no extra water power, polluting coal or oil are out – so only nuclear was left. Heck, I could have come up with that answer too.

Nuclear is supposedly economical. Nuclear is supposedly clean. Nuclear is supposedly safe. Well, let's have a closer look.

Cost breakdown

The typical costs quoted for nuclear-generated electricity is about 3 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh), including fuel, maintenance, and personnel. That is like measuring the cost of operating an automobile by counting fuel and periodic check-ups only, which for the average car is say 10 cents per km or for 20,000 km: \$2,000. A more accurate cost is 45 cents. Here is why. A typical car costs \$30,000. Capital invested at 5% means loss of income of \$1,500. Depreciation is at least 15 percent or \$4,500. Insurance: \$1,000.00. This adds up to \$9,000 or 45 cents per click.

The arithmetic for a nuclear reactor is no different. It needs uranium. Before that dangerous stuff is ready for use it must be dug out of the ground, separated from its tailings, and then processed – all procedures far more hazardous and energy-intensive than drilling for oil or mining coal. Add to the 3 cents per kWh the cost of financing, of research and development, plant amortization and decommissioning and spent-fuel storage into perpetuity (which means for ever and ever, from here to eternity) and fully costed nuclear power is by far our most expensive conventional energy. Just as with a car, the daily expense versus the ultimate price is more than four times as much: nuclear-generated electricity costs society at least 15 cents per kWh.

Is it clean?

The common notion is that nuclear energy is environmentally benign. True, it doesn't emit any carbon dioxide (CO₂) at all. However, indirectly all the energy needed to mine and process uranium and build the powerplants comes from oil. As petroleum becomes more scarce and expensive, the mining process will likewise become more costly and will yield less net energy. And then there is the direct waste of about 1,000 metric tons of high- and low-level hazardous

material, to be stored for tens of thousands of years to come. In addition, uranium mill tailings can amount to 100,000 metric tons per nuclear power plant per year.

I know, because years ago I had to appraise an abandoned uranium mine in the Bancroft-Cardiff area. Fact is that after nearly six decades of the development and use of atomic energy, no country in the world has yet succeeded in building a permanent high-level nuclear waste storage area.

So, what do we do?

As with Climate change, pollution, budget deficits, we simply roll the matter over to a next generation, to our beloved grandchildren. "Forgive us our trespasses...our sins of emission." Is nuclear power safe? Judging from Ontario's history with its Pickering and Darlington plants, these monsters are extremely complex. The more involved the technology, the more things can go wrong. The costs of repairs have always exceeded the initial estimates by at least 200 percent, just as the original price tag has always gone over budget by that same percentage and more.

Here comes a crazy thought. There is, supposedly, enough uranium to supply existing reactors for the next 40 years. But what if the entire world goes nuclear? Just imagine that, after about 10 years, when scores of plants in the world come on stream at an expense of untold billions (we are not the only ones with this brilliant idea), and there is not enough fuel left?

But we must do something. Right? Here is a typical statement by the Ontario Energy Minister, Dwight Duncan: "My hope is that over the long run, we bring on enough supply so that prices will not only stay where they are, (but) will go down." That is, of course, pure political claptrap. It will never go down.

In the meantime, just in case we do fall short, get some solar panels and energy efficient lamps and turn off any light that is not needed and invest in a sweater or two. Also plant trees around your home: they are excellent heat catchers in the summer and wind breakers in the winter.

Approaching the limits

Those are not the only changes we must implement in the coming years. Financially too we must adjust. In *Barron's*, my favorite financial weekly, I read about Richard Russell, an 80 year-old man who's had a lifetime of experience in the money market. Called all the right shots. Now he predicts that gold, which is as cheap as dirt, \$400 US per ounce, rising to \$1,000 and the stock market far too high at 10,000 about to drop to 4,000. Gutsy stuff as anything is concerning the future. Bad, because if he is correct then it means a severe depression.

What is my take on this? The best part of my life has been involved in appraising

commercial real estate. Since most of appraisals involve mortgages, which are a commitment by a financial institution to lend money three to five years in advance, part of the appraisal process involves an assessment, a stab in the dark, what the next three to five years will be, whether inflation or deflation, whether boom times or recession. Call it by a fancy word: a feasibility study.

Even though I have been retired for more than a decade, my interest in the future is still there: I am a forward-looking fellow. Take the economy at large. Politicians tell us with a straight face that growth can go on forever. They promise more of everything. We know, of course, that such a pledge is impossible. There are 'Limits To Growth.' We live in a world with finite resources. Judging by what I have been reading and observing we are approaching these limits.

Something new under the sun

We, in North America – and everybody else in the world is trying to imitate us, have built a society on the premise of cheap energy. This was not a bad strategy: cheap energy was a reality for most of the Twentieth Century. It made us the most successful of all peoples. But that very success also means that, should circumstances change, adjustments will be difficult. What we really did in the past century was to play poker with the planet without perceiving the implications of the game. We didn't plan it that way, of course, but, nevertheless we engaged in a gigantic gamble with the earth.

Looking forward means looking back as well. The past is the past and we can't do anything about it, but we have to know what happened lest we repeat our errors. The future can be twofold: a simple continuation of the past – politicians and economists always assume that this is the case – or a new direction. Today we have 'something new under the sun.' Up till now we've always talked about the weather, but, thanks to our carboholoc addiction, we have done something unique in human history: we are changing the climate with some awesome consequences for us at a time when certain shortages are emerging. It all means that our North American economy will not go back to its most glorious era, the Golden Nineties: the world is simply too full of people and their toys, who are overusing the resources.

Rising energy prices and natural gas shortages, resulting in electricity troubles, will force us to conserve, while hosts of other threats, such as fished-out waters and pollution point to human and natural tensions that suggests that we will enter a long, depressing era of "growth recession" with increasing unemployment and the ever present risk, with corporate and personal debt so high, of financial implosion.

Wishful thinking

For the North American economy there

is only one possible solution: starting now, the US must sell abroad tens of billions of goods and services more than they import. In other words: exports must rise much faster than goods brought in from abroad, that its trade balance will be miraculously reversed. This can only happen when: (1) its citizens stop buying five percent more goods and services than they produce, (2) The rest of the world somehow manages to expand rapidly and spontaneously, and (3) the US population at large starts saving ten percent of what they earn, so that the US debt can be financed from its own citizens.

Judging by present complacency and institutional lethargy, these are wishful thoughts. Also, given the low regard of the ROW (the Rest of the World) for the USA, it would be sheer madness for the US to base its economic strategy on the assumption that it will be hauled out of the present slump by a spontaneous long-term period of prosperity elsewhere. As it stands, the opposite is true: not only is the rest of the world itself locked into a recession but it is looking to the US economy to be the motor to fuel its own growth.

Of course there always is that classic remedy for chronic trade deficits: a drastic devaluation of US dollar. Richard Russell expects that the US dollar could lose half its value. That's bad news for its largest trade partners, China and Japan. They have accumulated mountainous US dollar reserves which they have used to prevent such a devaluation. At any rate it is doubtful whether a fall in the dollar, even a major one, really could generate the enormous rise in net exports needed given that the market is so stagnant.

So, Bush may wish for job growth to secure re-election. However the most likely outcome of his three fold deficit – budgets, trade and personal debts – will be further stagnation with grave consequences for the rest of the world, including dear old Canada. Sorry.

Bert Hielema resides in
Tweed, Ontario

Food...?
For Thought...??

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of which we may be unaware,
are brought to light
when we notice them in others.

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Classifieds

Pastors

...continued from p. 17

That's why he's focused on communion. In many CRCs children leave for church school before the part of the service when communion is celebrated. Some never even see the ceremony until they are eight or nine years old, and even then they may be excluded until they become "full" members of the church.

But, said Rev. VanNieuwenhuis, "When a child knows the love of God in Jesus Christ, and loves him back, and when the child understands that we are all God's children together, they should be joining us at the table." Dream Team ideals have spurred Rev. VanNieuwenhuis to invite anyone wanting to come to the table at the Lord's Supper to make a simple, age-appropriate profession of faith - all that CRC policy requires. More than 20 people have already said they're interested.

Learning Groups is as valuable as their studying together.

"I have always felt that pastors need to get together with other pastors regularly for sharing, support, skills training, and some laughs," said Kuyvenhoven.

The next application deadline is May 1. Applicants whose proposals are accepted will be notified by June 1. Peer Learning Groups may include up to eight people, primarily pastors, who share a common interest, ministry type, or geographic region, or have something else in common.

You can visit www.crcna.org/pastoralexcellence for a printable application, a completed sample application, and for more information about Peer Learning Groups and other SPE programs.

Refreshing the soul

Doug Kuyvenhoven, an elder at Lucknow CRC, meets with Rev. Janssens once a week for coffee and accountability. But, said Kuyvenhoven, "Even though we are close, I know that there are things that he can only talk about with other pastors, and only they can truly understand."

Pastors agree that the way they minister to one another in Peer



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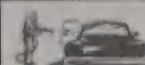
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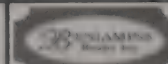
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Classifieds

Anniversaries

1954 April 23 2004

"By His wisdom a house is built and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with care and beautiful treasures."
Wedding Text: Proverbs 24:3,4

JOHN AND ANNA VANDERPLOEG (nee Miedema)

will celebrate their **50th Wedding Anniversary**. Together as children and grandchildren we give thanks to God for enriching our lives with these loving christian parents and grandparents.

Congratulations and best wishes from us:
Florence & Tom Ingerson, *Tinley Park, Illinois*
Agnes & Beau Cruz, *Mesa, Arizona*
Stuart & RoseMarie Vanderploeg, *Ponoka, Alberta*
Westley & Glenda Vanderploeg, *Kitchener, Ontario*
Clifford & Marilyn Vanderploeg, *Harrison, Ontario*
Tom & Pat Vanderploeg, *Calgary, Alberta*
Janice & Don Jamieson, *Waterloo, Ontario*
Glenn & Rhonda Vanderploeg, *Owen Sound, Ontario*
Edward & Jennifer Vanderploeg, *Shallow Lake, Ontario*
Richard & Tania Vanderploeg, *Owen Sound, Ontario*
Harold & Helena Vanderploeg, *Listowel, Ontario*
along with 27 grandchildren

An **Open House** will be held on Saturday, April 24th, 2004 from 2 - 4:30 p.m. at the First Christian Reformed Church in Owen Sound.

Home address: RR# 1, Shallow Lake ON N0H 2K0
Phone: 519-376-8344 Best wishes only.

1954 April 24 2004

With Thankfulness to God for all his blessings.
The children and grandchildren of

JOHN AND ANN LODEWYKS

Invite you to celebrate their **50th Wedding Anniversary**. Please join us at an **Open House** held Saturday April 24, 2004 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. Ancaster Christian Reformed Church 70 Garner Rd. E. Ancaster, Ontario
Best wishes only

Congratulations Mom and Dad From your children and Grandchildren:
Jack & Linda Lodewyks, *St. George*
Ashley, Brittny and Kristy
Ron & Rebecca Lodewyks, *York*
Brian & Elizabeth Lodewyks, *Hamilton*
Jonathan and Nicholas
David & Roberta Lodewyks, *Waterdown*
Rachel, Sarah and Joshua

Home Address: 506 Garner Road West Ancaster ON L9G 3K9

1959 April 17 2004
London, ON Thamesford, ON

"The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms."
Deut. 33:27a

With joy and thankfulness to God for his faithfulness and love, we are happy to announce the **45th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents,

TONY AND JANNY VAN KAMPEN (nee de Kam)

With much love and best wishes from:

Marjorie & Chris Perry, *Belleville, ON*
Matthew, Andrew, Daniel
Nancy & George Horlings, *Smithers, BC*
Jason, Meghan, Evan, Joshua
Ken (home with the Lord, Aug. 25, 1985)
Sharon Van Kampen & Steve Johnston, *Dundalk, ON*
Anthonie
Jennifer & Theo Van Kampen-Katerberg, *Fordwich, ON*
Jordan

Home Address: 192 Alison Road Thamesford ON N0M 2M0

**SYBREN AND ESTHER DEBOER**

were married April 7th, 1954.
Their wedding text was Psalm 37:5.

Their children and grandchildren:

Orval & Yvonne DeBoer
Jocelyn, Jolene, Chantel
Margaret & Harry Knip
Jilleana & Mark Poortinga,
Cherisse, Joshua
Anthony & Marian DeBoer
Nathan, Aaron, Adam
Andrew & Chris DeBoer
Stephanie, Ryan, Danielle

There is an **Open House** April 17th 2 - 4 p.m. at East Christian Reformed Church 476 Metcalfe Street E, Strathroy Ontario.
Best wishes only.

Address: 10 - 307 Metcalfe St E Strathroy ON N7G 1R1, Phone 519-245-9963

1954 April 14 2004
Witmarsum, Friesland Listowel, Ontario

With thankfulness to God, we plan, the Lord willing, to celebrate with

TED AND GAY HIEMSTRA (nee De Boer)

50 Years of Marriage. Congratulations from your children and grandchildren!

Sid Hiemstra & Barbara Vine, *Listowel*
Andy & Marg Hiemstra, *Port Perry*
Michelle & Stephen
Arlene & Thom McElhanney, *Whitby*
Sean & Kairn McElhanney
Jeremy McElhanney & Anne O'Connor
Diane & Bill Vyn, *London*
Benjamin & David
Peter & Kelly Hiemstra, *Kitchener*
Steve & Sandy Hiemstra, *Mitchell*
Nichole, Andrew & Rachel
Rob & Tasha Hiemstra, *Kitchener*
Jenna & Caleb

We invite family and friends to celebrate with us on Saturday, April 17, at an **Open House** at the Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Listowel from 2 - 4:30 p.m.
Best wishes only, please.

Home address: 835 Richmond Ave N Listowel ON N4W 2Z9

We regret that the Huibert De Groot obituary is one month later than when it was sent in originally because of difficulties in transmission

ZINGEND GELOVEN

**Saturdays at 8:00 a.m.
AM 1320 & AM 710**

NIEL AND WILLIE RIETEMA (Salomons)

with their children and grandchildren, look forward to celebrating their **50th Wedding Anniversary**. An **Open House** will be held Friday, April 30th from 2 - 4 p.m. at Blindman Valley Agricultural Centre in Bentley, Alberta.

GREAT IS GOD'S FAITHFULNESS!

Ben & Grace Rietema - Kevin, Brenda, Jason
Sy & Grace Bennik - Ron & Angela, Brad & Christy,
Yvonne, Danielle, Jessica, Kara
Winnifred Rietema
Marcel & Debbie Oostenbrink -
David, William, Michael, Luke, Adam
Fred & Linda Baong - Jordan, Matthew, Nathan
Address: Box 29, Bentley AB T9C 0J0

1954, Bloemendaal May 5 Calgary, 2004

*With thanksgiving to God we hope to celebrate
The 50th Wedding Anniversary
Of our parents and grandparents*

HANK AND WILLEMIEN (VanderBijl) VERHOEFF

*With a Thanksgiving Service & Refreshments
At Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church
3020 51st St SW Calgary, AB
On Saturday, May 8, 2004, at 3:00 - 5:00 PM*

*Paul & Cobi (Lies, Anya, Lance, Rudy)
Anya & Kenn Doid (Jesse, Cameron)
Stephen & Joyce (Jordan, Julia, Leanne)
Margaret & Thane Strandberg (Madeline, Adrian)
David & Brenda (Joshua, Marieka, Annalies)*

*"For the Lord is good, His love endures forever,
His faithfulness continues through all generations."*

Home Address: #214 3000 51 St SW

Calgary AB T3E 6S7 hvverhoeff@shaw.ca

Obituary

December 4, 1919 March 27, 2004

WILLIAM HOEKSTRA, Sr. of Montgomery, New York

On March 27, 2004, William Hoekstra, Sr. passed away to be with his Heavenly Father. He was the beloved husband of Dia Vegter for 54 years. They resided and farmed for more than 40 years in the Montgomery, NY, area and before that in the Washingtonville, NY, area, after immigrating from the Netherlands in 1950.

William was a member of the Goshen Christian Reformed Church and the Eastern Milk Producers Cooperative. While in the Netherlands he served in the Dutch army and was a member of the Resistance Movement.

He was the cherished father of Jerry & Luc Ottens, *Moorefield ON*; Dot & Ralph Zoppa, *Caledonia MI*; Bill & Sue Hoekstra, *Montgomery NY*; John & Deb Hoekstra, *Duluth GA*; Ron & Donna Gunderman, *Wawarsing NY*; and Louie & Pearl Gunderman *Port Jervis NY*. He will be missed by his 19 grandchildren.

William was predeceased by his parents, Gerben and Diewuoke Kooker, 4 brothers and 1 sister in the Netherlands, and by his brother, Andrew, of Middletown, NY.

His family will remember him as a strong man: strong in his work ethic, strong in his care and concern for his family, and strong in his faith in the Lord. His family has the comfort and confidence that he now resides with his Lord and Savior.

Visitation was on Wednesday, March 31. The funeral service was held on Thursday, April 1, at the Goshen Christian Reformed Church, officiated by Rev. John Nyitray. Burial was in the Florida Cemetery in Florida, NY.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Goshen Christian School, Goshen, NY 10924.

Correspondence: Mrs. Dia Hoekstra
97 Hoekstra Lane, Montgomery NY 12549

1954 April 21 2004

"We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield."
Psalm 33:20

We give thanks to God for his faithfulness as we celebrate our **50th Wedding Anniversary**.

FRANK AND JANNY EYGENRAAM (nee Winters)

Norman Eygenraam
Andrea
Wallace & Janet Eygenraam
Cheryl & Lee Eccleston, Kim-(Austin)
Kevin, David
John & Anna-Maria Eygenraam
Tamara & Shawn James-(Ryan, Zach)
Angela, Barry
Pete & Lynda Eygenraam
Janine, Dianne, Rachel, Gregory
Joyce & John Buis
Crystal & Jeremy Colvin-(Elizabeth)
Michael, Richard
Paul Eygenraam

Open House will be held at the First Christian Reformed Church, 320 Elm Street, St Thomas ON, Saturday April 24, 2004 from 1:30 to 4 p.m.

Mailing Address: 1 - 150 First Ave
St. Thomas ON N5R 4P3

Obituaries

Wouterswoude, NL Grimsby, ON
August 11, 1927 March 23, 2004
Psalm 46:1

PETER POTSTRA

went to be with the Lord after a courageous battle with cancer.

Survived by his loving wife of 56 years:
Jane (Janke Kuiken)

Children:

Ralph Potstra, Grimsby, ON
Ray & Cathy Potstra, Grimsby, ON and grandchildren: Evelyn, Brian, Alison, Jordan
Also survived by brother Cornelis Potstra and sister-in-law, Henny, of Stoney Creek, ON along with nieces Veronica, Shari Lynn and Melissa and nephew Tim and their families.
As well, Peter is survived by his three sisters and two brothers living in the Netherlands.

Memorial service was conducted at the Fruitland Christian Reformed Church on March 26, 2004

with Pastor Andrew Beunk officiating.

Correspondence: Ray & Cathy Potstra
10 Debora Drive, Grimsby ON L3M 4J2

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"As the deer pants for streams of water so my soul pants for you, O God." Psalm 42:1

HUIBERT DE GROOT

The Lord took home our father, grandfather, & great-grandfather on Feb. 13, 2004 in his 88th year.

Predeceased by his:

first wife of 40 years Janet De Groot (Huibers)
second wife of 18 years Dertje De Groot (Offeringa Smit, 1999)

Loving father and father-in-law of:

John & Agnes De Groot *London*
Fran & Bill Eekhof *Woodstock*
Jettie & John Houweling *Montreal*
Evaline & George Holstra *Oakville*
Alida De Groot *Strathroy*
stepson Derk Offeringa *Colorado Springs*
Loving Grandfather of 13 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren
Also survived by two sisters and one brother and predeceased by one brother and two sisters all in the Netherlands

Correspondence: Bill & Fran Eekhof
203- 770 Hughson St, Woodstock ON N4S 4P5

Classifieds / Job Opportunities

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For inspection call Harry Van Dyke 905-356-6005 email hvandyke@cogeco.ca or Dick Vermeer 905-945-8430 email: vermeer@ispnet.ca



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chair of council, or

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Vice-President (Academic), Redeemer University College
777 Garner Rd. E., Ancaster, Ontario, Canada L9K 1J4
Fax: (905) 648-2134, E-mail: jellens@redeemer.on.ca

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Redeemer University College
777 Garner Road East
Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4 Canada
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KNEVEL DUO IN CONCERT

Andre Knevel and son Andrew will be presenting an evening of Christian music on organ and piano on

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Plan to join us, at the Rehoboth

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Tickets will be available at the door. For information, contact

Louis Andela at (905) 765-6124.

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC.
In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

- Apr 10 Annual Festival of Praise** by the **Christian Male Chorus** Association of Southwestern Ontario. 7:30 p.m. Centennial Hall, 550 Wellington St. **London**. Five choirs with over 200 men participating. Tickets: \$13 (519)451-5484 or email: jetttrick@sympatico.ca Info: (519)637-4357.
- Apr 11 Dutch Community Easter Song Service** on Easter Sunday, at 7:30 p.m. At the Emmanuel Reformed Church 170 Clarke St. N. **Woodstock ON**, Rev. Roeland Hartmans officiating
- Apr 18, 24, 25 Hebron CRC, Whitby, Ontario**, 50th anniversary celebrations. See ad next issue or phone 1-905-655-5020 or website www.hebronrc.ca for more info
- Apr 24** The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "De Avond van de zevende Juli" 8 pm at the **Jordan Christian Heritage School**. Phone 519-283-6285 or 519-539-8940 for more info.
- Apr 24** THE MEN OF PRAISE (from Woodstock) in concert, at the Ebenezer CRC, **Jarvis Ont.**, at 7:30 pm. Freewill offering.
- Apr 24 Festival of Praise** Male Choirs from Brampton, Hamilton, York, Simcoe & St. Catharines. 7:30 pm. at Covenant CRC, 278 Parnell St. **St. Catharines**. For tickets (\$10) and info, call 905-934-1348. See ad this issue for more information.
- Apr 30** Knevel Duo in Concert Andre Knevel and son Andrew will be presenting Christian music on organ and piano on Friday 8 pm. at the Rehoboth United Reformed Church, 77 Glancaster Rd. **Ancaster**. Tickets at the door. For info: Louis Andela at (905)765-6124. See ad this issue.
- Apr 30** The **First Royal Dutch Treat** will take place at the Liberty Grand, Exhibition Place in **Toronto, Ontario**. See ad Mar. 29 issue for more information or see www.royaldutchtreat.ca
- Apr 30, May 2** John Calvin CRC, **Truro**, Nova Scotia 50th anniversary. Former ministers, members and friends are invited to a celebration potluck dinner & program Friday, and Sunday service. For more information call (902) 897-2083 or aalkema@ns.sympatico.ca
- May 1 Pro Musica Choir** Conductor: Brent Fifield, presents *O Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem*, Darke: *Mass in E*, *Psalm 43* by Mendelssohn, *Psalm 104* by Glick. Also selections by Ramisch, Purcell and Howells. Organist: Bruce Kirkpatrick Hill. 8:00 pm at Port Nelson United Church, 3132 South Drive, **Burlington ON** Adults \$12.00 Senior/Student \$8.00 Family (16 and under) \$30.00 Add \$2.00 at the door. For info call: 905 632 1347 or visit www.promusicachoir.org
- May 2 Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 pm Knox Presbyterian Church 55 Hincks St, **St. Thomas**. Freewill offering for Canadian Bible Society. (519)637-4357
- May 2** Guelph Spring Festival presents duo organists **Jan Overduin & Jonathan Oldengarm** in concert at 3:00 pm. A pre-concert chat will be held at 2:30 pm. Both events at St. George's Anglican Church, 99 Woolwich Street, **Guelph, ON**. For tickets and information, call the River Run Centre Box Office at 519-763-3000 or 1-877-520-2408, or visit www.guelphspringfestival.org
- May 7** Calgary Society of Organists presents **Jonathan Oldengarm** in concert, 8:00 pm., at Grace Presbyterian Church, **Calgary, AB**. For information call 403-249-0764. Single tickets are \$15 and single student/senior tickets are \$10.
- May 12** 50th anniversary of the Bowmanville, Ottawa, & Quinte Region Lady's Society. Convention at Day's Inn, 33 Benson St, **Kingston, ON**. See ad this page for details.
- May 15,16 Sarnia First Christian Reformed Church**, 70th Anniversary. Contact firstcrrc@xcelco.on.ca for more information, or call 519-336-8808.
- May 18** National organ competition winner **Jonathan Oldengarm** plays monumental works of the French romantics on the great Casavant organ at St. Mary's Basilica, Spring Garden Road at Barrington Street, **Halifax, NS**. 8:00 pm. For tickets and information, call the St. Cecilia Concert Series Box Office at 902-420-4085, or visit www.stcecilia.ca.
- May 29** First Christian Reformed Church of **Montreal** will celebrate its 50th anniversary. Ph: 1-514-684-4430 or E-mail: georgelucy@ael.ca

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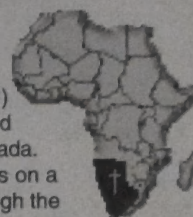
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News

Canada's military retaliates for Denmark's seizure of Canadian island

HANS ISLAND (CCNews) —

The news that Danish sailors had raised the Danish flag on a small island on the edges of our northern territory, a hop, skip and jump (by reindeer) from Santa's workshop, sent Canada's military scrambling. The *National Post* published a comparison of the relative strengths of the Canadian and the Danish navy that left Canadians chewing their fingernails. First the Russians steal our national game and make it their own, and now the Danes are whittling away at the only thing that still puts us on the map — our vast northern territories.

The air force scrambled to trade one of its Sea King helicopters for a team of reindeer, but, finding no takers, began buying up the local supply of duct tape. The navy, informed that it might be engaging Norse invaders, issued shiny new swords to its crew. Part of Canada's policy of multiculturalism involves meeting the enemy on common terms. Ever since the Vikings invaded our shores, the military has been preparing for a repeat performance. It pays to know your history.

In this case the Canadian military has shown better preparedness than the politicians. The Right was fixated on the danger of Al-Qaeda immigrants from Saudi



Canada's secret weapon

Arabia, and the Left on infiltration of our institutions from the South. Who would have thought that the biggest threat to our sovereignty would come from the north?

The territory being contested is called Hans Island, which explains the Danish claim that the island is theirs: it is obviously named after Hans Christian Anderson, their greatest writer. Had it been called Gretzky Island, it would obviously have been ours.

The island, one kilometre wide and three kilometres long, is located midway between Ellesmere Island and Greenland, and so is of great strategic importance. It is a stepping stone from Greenland (Danish territory) to the vast riches of the Great White North, the last terrestrial frontier. Canada didn't realize its strategic importance, however, until the Danes informed

our government about its location and that the Danish flag was waving on it. The island did not become visible on satellite photos until the flag popped up. Before that splash of color was added, it was mistaken for a large iceberg.

By the time the Canadian military had commandeered enough duct tape and sent its crew to Stratford-on-Avon to polish up its swordsmanship and swordsladyship, a spy on the staff of our embassy in Copenhagen reported that the Danish sailors had already returned and been welcomed back with a victory parade three months ago. They had occupied the island for three months and had left only after reading horrific reports about global warming and abandoned the island in fear that it would sink underneath them.

There are unsubstantiated re-

ports that the government used one of its secret funds to pay the inhabitants of an isolated village in Labrador to move to Hans Island to establish Canada's claim to the territory. A public relations firm in Quebec was paid \$2 million to produce brochures extolling the virtues of the island for settlement. Another \$3 million was spent on environmental studies and the rest of the \$8 million budgeted for the resettlement project was spent on the food, travel and lodging bill of the three parliamentary committees working on the top secret project. Since it was top secret, the committees decided to meet in Las Vegas, where they would not raise the suspicions of nosy Canadian reporters. After all, the latter are used to seeing Canadian politicians going on junkets to Las Vegas to raise funds to pay off our national debt.

The committees did come up with an ingenious plan, however. Lacking any human volunteers to occupy the island, they decided to populate it with Canadian seals branded with maple leaves. The man hired to carry out the project, however, was set upon by members of the Seals Have Souls Too Society, who got wind of his doings when the government advertised for bids on the job of producing the branding irons (a job which

went \$20,000 over budget). He was slaughtered when he got off the plane at Churchill, Manitoba. The members who participated in the slaughter are undergoing therapy for post-traumatic shock syndrome at government expense and have launched a class lawsuit for \$2 billion for violating their right to live in harmony of soul with their seal's kins.

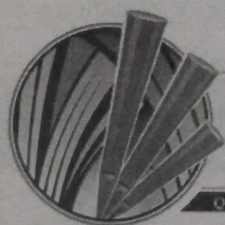
Meanwhile, the Canadian military was not passive. It took the offensive. Since Denmark had claimed one of our islands by planting a flag on it, our top brass reasoned, why don't we do the same to one of theirs? Since all our planes and ships are in use on peacekeeping ventures and are not available to defend our national sovereignty, a squad of Canadian sailors disguised as tourists hopped a plane to Denmark and from there a tourist boat to one of the outlying islands.

The plan collapsed, however, when the sailors planted the flag only to discover that it was a Swedish island and they had landed on a nude beach occupied by Swedes. The navy still hasn't recovered all of its personnel. According to reports from exhausted survivors recuperating in Toronto, they were surrounded and overrun by Swedish amazons with unladylike intentions.

The Council of Anticapitalist Churches of Canada published an open letter to the Prime Minister to propose a new strategy to preserve the sovereignty of Canada's vast undefended frontiers. It laid out a ten-year program to construct missile silos all along our borders. The silos would be operated by computers mounted on satellites in outer space which would detect any unauthorized incursions, whether by Danish sailors, Russian explorers, Chinese boat people or Americans with a bad sense of direction.

When the intruders approach one of the silos, a signal from outer space will cause a flagpole to pop up (instead of a missile) carrying a Canadian flag with a maple leaf on one side and a smiley face on the other.

At last report, the navy was still looking for one of its frigates. Apparently the Governor General mistook it for her personal yacht.



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